BHIMA BHOI

The greatest Adivasi Poet Prophet



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The Greatest of Tribals

Dr. Mayadhar Manasingh

The Khonds (Kandhas) of Orissa were notorious for the practice of human sacrifice for increasing the production of turmeric, their chief commercial crop. The British administration not only ended this barbarism but took steps also to get the turbulent Khonds settled as law-abiding agriculturists. A separate administrative unit, called the Khondmals, was created in central Orissa to enable the Government to maintain direct over-all control over these turbulent tribals. But even the British administrators were amazed not only at their bravery but also at their unflinching loyalty to their tribe, their chief and the plighted word.

It was perhaps this love of truth in these tribals that turned an illiterate, Poor and blind Khond in the last half of the last century into an uncompromising socio-religious iconoclast as a poet, saint and prophet with profound influence on large masses of people in Orissa. He is Bhima Bhoi, the poet laureate of the Alekh cult, whose vigorous ethical and monotheistic bhajanas in Oriya, have been thrilling and edifying the minds of millions all over Orissa even to-day. The average Khond is still an animist. It is therefore amazing how

from a primitive, animistic society there sprang up a man who, spurning the specious ways of idolatory of common Hinduism, rose straight into the pure thin air of Vedantic abstraction and Budhistic self-culture, which even the average Indian intellectual finds a little uncomfortable.

Forfunately for us, Bhima Bhoi has not yet been turned into a mythical figure by his co-religionists, as they have done in the case of his guru, Mahima Gossain, the founder of the Alekh cult. There is enough evidence to show that in his daily habits and common behaviour this genius was an average human with virtues as well as weaknesses. The village where he was born and the one where he died are still indentified. His last home in the ex-State of Sonepur in Orissa, still exists. His last descendant also died at a not very distant date.

Bhima was born in an interior village of the ex-State of Rairkhol in Orissa,—a very undeveloped area even today. He spent his entire childhood tending cattle for a living. It was at this time that the poor boy completely lost his vision due to an attack of small pox. But Blindness might have helped the sensitive and introspective mind of the future saint to probe into the mysteries of existence, starting from his own misfortune. While in this psychological state of mind, the sensitive genius appears to have come in touch with the wandering preacher, Mahima Gossain. This contact

with a holy and developed soul seems to have sparked the dormant genius in the illiterate young tribal and turned the servant-boy into an inspired poet, which was a matter of great significance in the entire field of Indian literature. The story of the metting of Bhima and Mahima Gossain and the former's development as a poet-saint, clearly remind us of a similar meeting in the last century in the Kali temple at Dakhineswar, near Calcutta. between the saint Ramakrishna and the young Narendranath Dutta with consequences of almost the same character.

Having no opportunity whatsoever for schooling Bhima Bhoi remained completely illiterate all his life. Hence his several hundred psalms, hymns, prayers and prophecies were absolutely extempore compositions. These are generally sung to the resounding rhythm of a Khanjani (castanet) and are among the finest religious poetry in Oriya literature. Though expressed in the colloquial, unpolished speech of the illiterate mass, they lift the audience to a high stratum where one breathes the air of purity, ho iness and unadulterated truth. They are not denominational, though the post was the very mouthpiece of the Aleth cult. Truly inspired poet that he was, Bhima's outpourings are not the dogmatic propaganda of a sectarian tenet, but a telling record of his own souls, his own spiritual agonies and his own vision. Their universal appeal comes out of the

deep personal passions of an unsophisticated genius.

Here, for instance, are lines which unashamedly express his sense of utter frustration, bringing to mind similar word of Jesus Christ on the Cross: "Oh my Lord, why don't you help me ? For preaching your glory my own reputation is broken to pieces. For preaching you as the unknown one, they taunt me as a Christian and put me to untold sufferings. Though covered with sin, they denounce me if I talk to them the religion of truth. They shout, 'Drive him away, drive away, let us see how his Master protects him. He is a d-n sinner, refuse him food or shelter'. And when I preach of equality, they retaliate by treating me like a dog. My Lord, this is my fate wherever I go. I feel I should henceforth stop going about. In the face of these tyrannies where shall I go ?

But inspite of his poverty, blindness and homelessness, the poet never ceased to feel deeply for the suffering fellow humans. In one of his bhajanas he says in a passionate prayer to his God :

"The twins of happiness and misery, bondage and freedom, are all your creation. Who can carry with ease this heavy burden of sin which is your creation ? Let me, therefore, lay them at your own feet, Why should not you finally settle this matter ? where else shall I go for a solution ? I have been hoping to collect my sins in a tray and

place it at your feet. Those devoted to you get wasted. Praying and weeping. Why don't you forgive people their sins or run the world in an equitable manner ? Who, like you, could indeed be so heartless as not to have compassion for sentient beings in their endless sorrows and sufferings ? As for me, I would prefer to stay in hell forever, if that would save the world.

As stated elsewhere 2 ✻ when the National Academy of letters (Sahitya Akademy) asked for a line or a couplet from each of the 14 Indian languages, symbolic of its total ethos or representing a fine sense of humanitarianism, the litterateurs of Orissa selected the last line of the above quotation, thus endowing on an illiterate, poor and blind tribal, a unique national honour.

The illiterate poet's taunts against the idolatry of the Hindus is expressed in many a bhajana. Thus he says in one of them.

"It is in sheer ignorance that people worship idols icons, offering cakes,sweets and puddings,and appealing to them for protection. They do not realise the simple fact that those are mere figures, without souls. How can they grant them their wishes ? People do not worship Him who created them but run to statues of wood and metal and say, 'save us, save us' How unthinking is this approach of living human beings to dead idols ! And how strange

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✻ 2. See Chapter-XI of the book entitled 'The Saga of the land of Jagannath' by Dr. Manasingh.

that He who created humanity out of nothing is so clean forgotten !".

The poet-prophet spent the best part of his life wandering from place to place, preaching his nonidoltrous and montheistic cult to all and sundry, and bravely facing insults, discomforts and tyrannies like early christian evangelists. But at times, he seems to have lost patience with the slow pace at which his "true religion" was making headway. Overwhelmed with the pervasive paganism all around, he burst out in many bhajanas. like the Hebrewprophets, in righetous indinagtion. Says he in one of the bhajanas.

"These tyrannies shall end. The time is not far off when the great Master will break the ego of these tyrans. He will get things done in such subtle ways that the sinners will disappear one by one without the others being even aware of it. They are immersed in such sins and immoralities and so involved in hypocrisies that no religion can save them in any way. Some of those sinners will be burnt in fire, some will be drowned in water and some will just drop off and die. Some will be stung to death by serpents and others will meet death with halters round their necks. Still others will suffer from unknown diseases, their

bodies shaking with palsy, and those that survive will be lacking in vitality."

Completely unlettered, this tribal saint's concept of God, which transcended the limitation of icons and personalities, reaches amazingly universal and progressive heights. He says : "God himself is going through sufferings to keep the world He created, going".

The cosmological vision of this blind tribal very strongly brings to our mind the famous Creation hymn of the Rig-Veda.

"The earth, rocks, air and water did not exist then. Only the great pervasive Void overspread the soundless existence. Neither the myriad stars nor the sum nor the moon existed. Day and night were one. There was neither Heaven nor Earth nor Hell nor any of the Trinity. Not one of the three hundred and thirty-three million gods was there, nor even sound. Nor any of the five elements. Listen, wise men, therefore, how things originated. And carefully store the information in your mind."

Late in life, the blind poet probably became tired of constant wanderings. By that time he had acquired such reputation as a saint that blue-

blooded Brahmins came forward to give their daughters in marriage to this swarthy-skinned tribal. He is said to have consented to marry only two helpless Brahmin widow, one after the other. The last phase of his life, in contrast to his childhood and youth, is supposed to have been full of honour and amenities. There is no doubt whatsoever that this illiterate tirbal was a unique personality, perhaps the greatest tribal of India and one more shining example of India's marvellous heritage of unlettered wisdom, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his wife Saradamoni.



(Reproduced from the famous book 'The Saga of the Land of Jagannath' written by Dr. Manasingh and published by M/s. J. Mohapatra & Co., Chhatra Sathi, Cuttack-2 with the kised permission of the Author.)

Bhima Bhoi

Nilamani Senapati

Bhima Bhoi was undoubtedly the first and foremost missionary of Mahima Dharma. His birth is shrouded in mystery. Till now it was believed that he was born of Kandha parents of Gramadiha in Rairakhol. But now Dr. Nabina Kumar Sahu 1 has recorded that he was a discarded body in a plam grove outside village 'Jata Singha' in Bira Maharajpur Police-Station of ex-Sonepur State. A Kandha couple, Danar and Gouri picked him up and took him to their house. Danar died shortly after and Gouri married his brother Dhaneswar and shifted to village Kandhar in Rairakhol ex-State. It was believed till now that Bhima Bhoi was born blind, but Dr. Krushna Chandra Panigrahi 2 has quoted from Bhima Bhoi's own composition to prove that he could not possibly have been blind.

'Stuti Chintamani' a book written by Bhima Bhoi contains copious autobiographical references from

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* 1. Essay "Bhima Bhoi" by Dr. N. K. Sahu published in Mahima Dharma Darshan by Shankar philosophy Association of D. A. V. College, Koraput pages 17 to 21.

* 2. Ibid PP. 13—16 by Dr. K. C. Panigrahi

which it clearly appears that an author who is blind could not have written that. It is a collection of couplets. There are a hundred groups. Each group contains 20 couplets and is called a Boli. Bolis 20, 21 and 22 have many Biodata. Boli 21 starts with Bhima Bhoi's consciousness at the age of 2. He met a wandering mendicant at the age of 4 in the month of Jyestha. From his description, this mendicant was obviously Mahima Gosain, as he distinctly saw marks of Shankha and Chakra on his palms. At the age of 7, he was in great distress on account of want of food. At the age of 12, he was a grazier tending cattle in the forest and starved the whole day He was beaten and thoroughly taken to task for any supposed fault. At the age of 14 his misery was unbearable. It appears as if he was thinking of ending his life. There is nothing to show how he became a poet and a Pandit as he says, nor how his miseries abated. He was however aware that he was an orphan. He remembers that his place of birth was Gopa Madhupur and that he had read a little in his childhood.

There is not a word in any of his writings that he was blind. While he has gone into such detail, would he not have referred to his blindness, if he had been really blind ?

The book is a full of self pity. In his time Mahima Dharma was persecuted. He was abused a 'Kirastan'—a Christin. He was severely chastised

for repeating 'Alekh'. He was abused as a 'Pathan' and chased away. He was boycotted. "If we are persecuted wherever we go, where will we preach !" "I have not finished yet. I have lots to say about worldly life. How much shall I write with Lekhan (stylo) and leaf ? It has become a Potha."

Dr. Arta Ballav Mahanti draws his conclusion about Bhima Bhoi's blindness from references in books written by devotees of Mahima Dharma. Dr. Panigrahi's explanation is that the blindness was spiritual which was removed by Guru Mahima Gosain. Indeed the well-known Sloka says what a Guru does—"I bow down to the Guru who has opened my eyes". Bhima Bhoi spent his early days in poverty, but there is sufficient evidence in his own writings that he was well off towards the end. "Listen O' learned men to my strange story. You are blaming me without knowing the past, the present and the future. It was in my fate that I should have wealth, wife and son. I am enjoying the fruits of my previous deeds. What does it matter to anybody else ?"

It is now accepted that Bhima Bhoi was born in **1850 and died in 1895**. He converted large number of people to Mahima Dharma. Dr. Nabin Kumar Sahu has recorded a story that in his boyhood Bhima Bhoi fell in to a well and was rescued by Mahima Gosain. Sifting the stories of all imginations the fact comes out that Bhima Bhoi was a disciple and a devotee of Mahima

Gosain. As he was a prolific composer of devotional songs, Mahima Gosain appointed four Brahmins to record what he was composing. One of them was Hari Panda whose daughter Sriya Debi is still living as the Trustee of Bhima Bhoi Ashram at Khaliapali in ex-Sonepur State. Bhima Bhoi's spiritual consort was Arnapurna Debi. He had two wives from whom he got his son Kapileswar and daughter Labanyabati. They died in 1935 36. A list of books written by Bhima Bhoi is given below :—

(1) Stuti Chintamani
(2) Sruti Nisedha Gita
(3) Asthaka Bihari Gita
(4) Bhajan Mala
(5) Brahma Nirupana Geeta
(6) Nirbeda Sadhana
(7) Adi Anta Geeta
(8) Bangala Atha Bhajan
(9) Chautisa Granthamala

During Bhima Bhoi's life time a large number of his converts marched from Sambalpur to Puri to raid Jagannath temple and burn the image of Lord Jagannath. This incident took place on 1st March 1881, A case was tried, the judgement of which is now in the Board of Revenue at Cuttack. Bhima Bhoi is not an accused. There is nothing to show that he either recruited the fanatics or accompanied them. From his philosophy of Mahima Dharma as disclosed in his writings, it is unlikely

that he would have taken part in this raid. If he had, it is certain that he would have been one of the accused in the case.

It is hoped that this article will dispel many of the misconceptions which eminent authors and historians have recorded about Bhima Bhoi. In short, he was not blind. He did not take part in the raid on Jagannath temple. If he was a discarded baby as found by Dr. Sahu his parentage is unknown. Therefore, it cannot be said whether he was a Kandha even though he was brought up by a Kandha couple. He was quite well off towards the end of his short life of 45 years. He had two wives and one or two spiritual consorts.

There is nothing to show if Bhima Bhoi met Mahima Gosain after his conversion. It is surprising. After receiving spiritual inspiration one would have expected him to be a constant companion of Gosain as Govinda Das Baba was. But he attended the Mahima convention which was held at Joranda soon after the Gosain passed away and according to Dr. Sahu, he was dissatisfied with the deliberations. It was only after that, he started his Ashram in Khaliapali. It was in 1876.



Bhima Bhoi---The Poet Devotee

Harihar Patel

The celebrated religious poet and devotee Bhima Bhoi, it is said, was born in a Kandha family in village Gramadiha of Rairkhol Sub-Division in Sambalpur District of Orissa. He was born sometime between 1855 to 1860 and died in 1895. He was an orphan and lived upon daily wages in his early days. He was born blind According to the poet himself, he could acquire his poetical powers and knowledge about religion only by the blessings of his guru 'MAHIMA MAHAPRABHU'.

Bhima Bhoi's birth was predicted long before. In 'Kalpasanghita' by Achutananda in the 15th century, it was revealed that Radha will take birth in the world and will be called Bhima Bhoi. There is mention about this in 'Adisanghita' also, where it was said that Radha will be born as a man in the world in a Kandha family and will live in poverty, who will have vast poetical powers. Bhima Bhoi has revealed in his own poems about his miserable early days. He says that when he was two years old, he had already acquired considerable knowledge; when he was four years old, a Yogi wandering about, appeared to him and there were marks of Sankha (conch)

and Wheel (chakra) in his hands. This he could see with his divine eye sight.

There is a story about his initiation to Mahima cult. It is said that one day at mid-night, Mahima Swami came with Saint Sidha Govinda Baba to his house and called Bhima Bhoi. He replied "Who are you ? Why do you call me at this hour of night ?" The Mahima Swami said. "By your good fortune we have come here. Come out soon." Bhima Bhoi said "I am blind. If you have come because of my good fortune, give me eye-sight, so that I will know about my prior good fortune." It is said, Bhima Bhoi acquired eye-sight, came out and saw both who appeared like sun and moon to him. He fell prostrate at their feet. Mahima Swami touched his head, blessed and asked him to get up. Mahima Swami revealed that God has come down to earth in flesh and blood during this Kali Yug to spread out Satya Mahima Dharma and said that he (Bhima) would be initiated to this cult. Bhima Bhoi requested Mahima Swami to impart knowledge about the cult.

Mahima Swami touched his head, imparted knowledge to him, blessed and endowed him with poetical powers to sing about Satya Mahima Dharma in Brahma Muhurta (pre-dawn period.) Bhima Bhoi then said that he had already seen the feet of Mahima Swami and he would not like to have his eye-sight any longer to see and get

immersed in earthly sights. Thus Bhima Bhoi acquired inner eye-sight and deprived himself of his physical eye-sight again. This may be just a story; but it goes to establish that Bhima Bhoi was inspired to be a religious poet of the Mahima cult.

At one place in his composition Bhima Bhoi says, "I was illietrate fr m my birth; at the age of sixteen I composed poems; I know nothing about Veda, scriptures, etc. My Guru prompts me from my heart. My Guru gives me the khowledge and I compose the stanzas. Without Guru's prompting, and command, I know nothing." Again ' My poetical powers are due to Shri Guru. I am an youth without any intelligence. I have composed by Guru's command. By my-self, I am incapable. to say anything".

It is said, after meeting Mahima Swami, Bhima Bhoi used to recite Bhajans every morning. Four devotees of Mahima cult had been ordered by the Swami to be with Bhima Bhoi always and write down whatever he sang.

Bhima Bhoi, though belonged to Kandha tribe, had married a Brahmin woman and had one son and one daughter by her. He was of fair comp'exion and handsome appearance. He was also a fine singer and could captivate the attention of the audience while signing Bhajan playing on a 'Khanjani.' His fame went far and wide. He made

camps in different places and finally settled down in Khaliapali of Sonepur and passed his days there till the end of his life engaging himself in composition of several of his works.

To appreciate the works of Bhima Bhoi properly it is necessary to know something about the Mahima cult.' 'Mahima' as explained by Avadhuta Biswanath Baba means 'Supreme' higher then which nothing exists. The founder of this cult was called Mahima Swami or Alekh Swami, It is believed that formless Brahma from the void or Sunya had come down to earth as Alekh Swami to establish Mahima Dharma. This was in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The Mahima cult is strictly and solely occupied with knowledge of the Self and it is claimed that Mahima Swami has imparted full knowledge about Self. Some are inclined to see no difference between Budhism and the Mahima cult. But the two are not the same. In Mahima cult there is call for surrender to one Brahma and prescription for Sadhana. Budhism is silent about God.

The importance of Guru is recognised in almost each religion of India. But special importance is attached to the word 'Guru' in Mahima cult which regards Parama Brahma as the one and the only Guru. That is why, Parama Brahma is also called Guru Brahma. To lose the individual existence in Parama Brahma is the aim and object of this cult. The disciples of this cult believe in

Avatara. They believe that Mahima Swami did not undergo the process of birth of human being, but came from the Void or Sunya, assumed the shape of a human being, and after preaching about the cult returned to the Void. He has no birth or death.

The disciples of Mahima cult do not believe in gods and goddesses and are opposed to worship of idols or images. Bhima Bhoi speaking about this says in his Stuti Chintamani,

"I do not worship the gods
and goddesses nor the
earthen and stone idol,
I meditate on You alone in all earnestness
seeking salvation of my soul."

Again, "Foolishly the people worship gods,
fall prostrate and seek protection,
promising sweets and other stuffs.
They do not remember Him
who builds up Body and Soul
And entreat the wooden
image to be the Saviour.
The animate seeks relationship
with the inanimate;
what a folly.—
forgetting Him of the Void Who give
Body and Soul, how silly."

The Mahima cult also recognises no cast barriers. All are admitted and that equally to its fold. All

are regarded as sons and daughters of Parama Brahma and are equally entitled to worship Him. The parama Brahma is one and there is no second. He is Alekh or without form, Niranjan or eternal and is without any characteristics (Nirguna). Mahima cult is based on principles of renunciation (Sannyasa). They seek withdrawal from worldly matters. The Avadhuts or Sannyasis are expected to be possessed of high moral standard. Speaking about them Bhima Bhoi says—

"Enduring like this earth, sweet and soft spoken, pacific, kind and merciful;

Ocean-like intelligence and wisdom; and then only can one be called a Saint, a Noble Soul,

Conscience, like the sky expressive of Brahma, speech full of knowledge;

One with the Universe in his realisation,
then only is he a Yogi, a Sage."

However, the cult also admits of worldly devotees and prescribes for them a sort of a code of conduct to be observed. Bhima Bhoi speaks about this in his composition and says—

"Conquer passion, anger, greed and attachment; by knowledge.

Keep off violence, deceipt, crookedness and discord; avoid them all

Covet not for others wealth. others wives;

Remember One and Guru Brahma and be you called wise

Again, "Speak in Truth and move in truth

Your deeds of Truth-action will shine ages through."

He also speaks about ideal worldly life elsewhere in his compositions.

His own feeling of compassion for the world is most striking. He says,—

"The sufferings of the humanity,
the limitless miseries of
the world-who can tolerate;
Let my life, remain doomed,
but let the sufferings of the
Universe mitigate."

Bhima Bhoi had dedicated all his poetical power to the propagation of the Mahima cult and its missions. The cult is based entirely on Faith and Devotion and yet the theme dealt with in the cult,—the subject matter for propagation— is essentially concerned with intellect. Had the cult been some thing like Vaishnabism, the task of Bhima Bhoi, with his poetical genious would have been something else. But the Mahima cult is somewhat puritanic in zeal and fervour and the task as such, was very much different, difficult of performance and a trying one. We find this feeling of the poet him-self in his lamentations at places.

It will be proper now to review his different works briefly.

One of his composition is "Stuti Nisedha Geeta"

Vedic ideas which should not be accepted.' This composition records all his protests and reactions against many religious and social ideas and practices in vogue during his time, rather bitterly and with all intensity.

Bhima Bhoi, and for that the Mahima cult, is against idol worship. He has attributed the creation of the universe, the world and all things worldly to Nirakara or the Formless God at the behest of the Param Brahma or the Supreme. Nirakara is described as a purple patch of Jyoti or Light without any shape or form. He is attributed to have created Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar and the pantheon of Hindu gods to advance the cause of the creation. In their conduct in course of time they are depicted to have exhibited several inadequacies and gone out of importance being dealt with by the Supreme. Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar, Rama, Krishna, Jagnnath, Parvati and like that the 33 crores of gods and goddesses are described of inadequacies, deficiencies, narrowness and limitations etc. and are not to be worshipped as the Supreme. They are, however, all located in the body of a human being helping him to reach the Supreme.

"The thirty three crores of gods, have all their abode in the body".

"No need to contemplate on gods and goddesses,
Achieve the Supreme by nishkama meditation."

"No need to worship idols, this Body is from the Bodyless;

Meditate on the Bodyless, and Acquire the knowledge of Brahma the formless."

"Jagnnath is in your body,
Why do you worship the image ?
The idol is only dry wood,
how can it take you to Baikuntha ?"

"Form is tainted with sin;
and is enemy of Imagination,
They fail to realise Brahma in
themselves and foolishly wander
about in the externalities."

He has discribed limitations to the Veda and speaks about Nirveda or contemplation beyond Veda. He has severely criticised the Brahmins of faulty understanding of Veda and accused them of misdoings also in the name of Veda.

He has severely condemned Japa or meditation with Tulsi Kanthi, Dashami and Ekadashi fastings and festivities etc. in their external observation and gives out the psychological meaning or the spiritual import of those. For example he says—

"The real kanthi is the Jyoti Nama Brahma;

Persue religion and meditate on it."

"Dashmi really means Dashanga yoga, Do it."

"Ekadashi is actually the Ek-Akshyar or the One; Realise this.

You will conquer, birth & death. Meditate on this every day and observe Ekadashi in this way.

Don't discriminate. Have no hesitation (Bikar). This is the Dharma of Nirbeda Prescription."

Regarding 'Nirmallya Sevana' he has said, "They do not understand what is Nirmallya, Nirmallya is actually pure knowledge, and it makes one a devotee of the Nirguna."

Thus the composition is full of scating criticism and pointed attacks on popular practices of religions prescription in vogue without proper understanding, with persuasion to meditate only on the Supreme or the Param Brahma.

'Nirbeda Sadhan' or 'Contemplation beyond Vedas' purports to be a dialogue in poetry between Govinda Baba and Anadi Brahma and others. It gives the story of initiation of Govinda Baba to Alekh cult and in course of the dialogues gives the story of Creation. Govinda Baba is supposed to be the incarnation of Jagannath. Anadi Brahma says to Govinda that at first there was Void. Out of the Void was born 'Om'. From 'Om' were born Word, Form, Light, Water and the World and so on. It says 'Supreme' created the Void, the Nirakar and the Adisakti. It explains how Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswar also were born. It is Nirakara who looks after the Universe at the behest of Anadi or the Supreme. Beyond Nirakara and the Void is Mahanitya or the Eternal Present which is the abode of Anadi or the Supreme. It is said Veda deals up to about the Void or the Mahashunya. It says nothing about the Mahanitya,

whereas this being the abode of Anadi or the Supreme, ought to be the contemplation of all The Mahima cult is described as the Nirbeda Sadhana or contemplation beyond Veda. perhaps for that reason.

Another composition is called the 'Adi Anta Gita' or the story of the two ends. This is in the form of a dialogue in Poetry between live and Parama or Prakriti and Purusha. This composition purports to give the psychological interpretation or the spiritual import of the Veda, Shastra, Purana, etc, various stories in those and about the Rishis. Briefly it says that the Human Being is the representative of the Universe and all are located in the body carrying out their various functions. Even the stories, including Ramayana and Mahabharata are given their psychological interpretations and explained in terms of human body and mind, conduct and action of male and female and in terms of their virtues and vices interacting. All human conduct and actions have their psychological interpretation—man had woman uniting, birth, death and so on.

'Astak Bihari Gita', 'Brahma Nirupana Gita' are all treatises on the Mahima cult and elaboration of its teachings.

Another piece of composition called 'Padma Kalpa' is full of predictions and prophecies about the future, The Poet Saint was utterly dis-satisfied with the social conditions during his time.

He was annoyed with many and predicted doom but always with the assertion that 'Kali Yug' is coming to an end and the Supreme will come to reign and bring about 'Satya Yug'; the evils will be destroyed and the virtuous will survive. Some people dispute that 'Padma Kalpa' is not the work of Bhima Bhoi. But throughout the composition Bhima Bhoi is ascribed as the composer and considering the fact that his other compositions are also interspersed with predictions and prophecies, there is no reason to believe that he could not have composed this which gives the predictions in a concentrated manner.

The outstanding compositions of the poet are 'Bhajanmala' or 'the collection of prayers" and the "Stuti Chintamoni" or "the thoughts in prayer." The prayers in the Bhajanamala are remarkable for lucidity, exposition of his ideas and sentiment. They are perfect pieces of music meant to be sung. The substance is, in fact, immersed in the feeling and tone and the musical content of the prayers becomes more impressive. In some of the lyrical prayers he gives out many incidents in his life, about his Sadhana and also a good account of his Guru 'Mahima Swami'. Whatever be the theme of the prayer, the perfect flow in the piece of the composition, the fluidity, the intensity of feeling, the sincerity of the tone and his emotion are full of impact.

The same can also be said of the prayers in the

'Stuti Chintamoni"; but the abundance of lyrical element is somewhat more in this than in the other composition. It seems, the poet had composed the prayers in 'Stuti Chintamoni' right when he was engaged in the propagation of the cult. More than half of the prayers in the collection give out the opposition and obstacles he had to face in the society including insult and humiliation, and are lyrical, pathetic and reacting in nature addressed to Alekh Swami to lift him up from the situation. The style of Bhima Bhoi is unique and his own, and it is very difficult to give a proper rendering. The intensity of feeling with which he expresses is terrible and most touching. It rends the heart. It is intensity of feminine feeling. The hoot-hoots and the ridicules he had to swallow are so intensely described that, one wonders, if there could be any better expression. He recollects his past laments, weeps, reaffirms his devotion, surrenders to Him, rebukes the miscreants and the teasers, curses them, predicts dire consequences and a dismal future, incites Him to respond and in despair at times has rebuked Him that He is a snob. Then he repents, lest he has not been able to recognise Him yet and pathetically implores to show him the path. Inspite of all oppositions, obstructions and obstacles, it seems, he was able to achieve success to some extent and in the last about fifteen or sixteen prayers, he seems contented with whatever was achieved and feels happy.

The tone has changed. Most probably he had retrieved himself from much of worldly sufferings and felt himself in a position to pity and condemn those who were irresponsive. He prescribes for them a code of moral conduct with all seriousness.

'Brahma Chalak' is an attempt to explain the real import of Veda. "Chautisa Madhu Chakra" or 'Bee hive of Chautisa' is perhaps a minor composition of the poet; but it has its importance from other points of view. It is called chautisa, because each composition in it consists of 34 stanzas. The contents of the compositions are more or less as in 'Stuti Chintamoni' but less lyrical and more universal. The literary qualities in the compositions are more outstanding than the religious or the philosophical content. Perhaps he was making efforts to make religious and philosophical matters saturated with literary qualities freely in these compositions. However, two pieces of composition in this are completely different and also deal with a theme not connected with the Mahima cult The two pieces sing about love play between Radha and Krishna. At places they purport to be dialogue between them. The description has been so absorbing that in one piece of the composition the poet has forgotten the limit of thirtyfour stanzas set upon by himself. Some hesitate to admit these two pieces of compositions to be that of the poet. But there is no incongruity in the style and there seems to be no reason to accept

that view. In fact, the kind of poetic exuberance manifested in these pieces are in evidence elsewhere also in suppression, seriously obstructed by religious inhibition. In these two pieces all inhibtions are gone. They give unfettered and uninhibited expression to the poetic feelings of the poet. In fact,these two pieces are widel sung during marriage time by drummers attended with drum beatings and dance. Might be, in some gay mood, or at a moment of laxity, the poet forgot the self imposed task, got rid of its dead weight, flung aside the barriers and inhibitions and gave vent to the poetic exuberance bubbling within him for the purpose of being sung on gay occasions. These two pieces being compositions in departure from his tradition and set theme, could perhaps be ignored. But they are important in that they give an indication as to what Bhima Bhoi would have been without the imposed task of preaching Mahima cult. Most probably his poetic genius would have taken a different direction. He would have perhaps produced erotic, sensuous poetry of devastating influence in the tradition of Kavi Samrat Upendra Bhanja which would have shocked or surprised the world. Whether that would have perfected his genius more or spoiled it, is a question which can not be answered for certain.

The form and style of his poetry has its own beauty. It has a dazzling fluidity, rippling flow of a river,reflecting glimmering radiance and brightness of the Sun, Moon and Stars. The intensity of feeling is interspersed with the flow of expression. The tone with the maturity of writer lends to the intensity and makes it impressive apart from the prosaic task. Bhima Bhoi is a bright example of ineffable poetic genius.



The Mahima Movement In Orissa During the 19th Century

By M. P. Das

The history of the Mahima movement is not known in detail as no systematic attempt has been made so far to compile the history on a scientific basis. The primary sources on Mahima Dharma are available in palmleaf manuscripts some of which are still unpublished. The secondary sources in the form of publications have come out in recent years dealing with the history, philosophy and teachings of Mahima Dharma. It is desirable that a systematic attempt should be made to compile atleast the source materials on the History of Mahima Dharma to help the scholars in their scholarly investigation. Among the secondary sources the following articles and books may be consulted by the research scholars.

1) Sambalpur District Gazetteer (1909).
2) History of Mahima Dharma (in Oriya) by Brahma Abadhuta Biswanath Baba.
3) An essay by Dr. (Miss) Anncharlott. Eschmann. University of Heideburg, Member of the Orissa Research Project.
4) Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors (1901) by C. E. Buckland.

5) 'Stuti Chintamani' and 'Bhajan Mala' by Bhima Bhoi.

6) Philosophy of Mahima Dharma (in Oriya) by Brahma Abadhuta Biswanath Babá published by the Utkal University.

7) Mahima Dhärma Pratipadaka (Oriya) by Brahma Abadhuta Biswanath Baba.

8) Viswa Bharati, Annual—Vol. IV (1950)

9) An article on Philosophy of Mahima Dharma by Vani Basu.

10) Proceedings of the 41st Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission.

11) Gazetteer of India, Orissa (Dhenkanal) (1972)

12) Mahima Dharma of Orissa by Shri Chittaranjan Das.

Sri Chittaranjan Das has in fact thrown some new light on the origin and meaning of this movement. He has removed some doubts and errors committed by N. N. Vasu in his book entitled "The modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa" regarding the history of Mahima movement in Orissa.

The exponents of the Mahima Cult never liked any kind of publicity as a result of which their activities were shrouded in obscurity for a long time. It has now been accepted that Mahima Goswami who propagated this faith appeared for the first time

at Puri in 1826. He gave up his worldly life in 1876 and founded a matha at Joranda in the district of Dhenkanal which became the head-quarters of the Mahima movement.. The first convert to this cult was Siddha Govinda Baba. Another convert was Bhima Bhoi who got the blessing of Master and composed a number of philosophical poems. It is happy to note that most of his works have been published recently in two editions.

Mahima Goswami travelled throughout Orissa. It is traditionally believed that there were 92 Siddhas to propagate this faith in and outside Orissa. There are at present many **Ashrams** of this cult in Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and in Madhya Pradesh also. The followers of the cult were to sing the prayers of (Alekha Parama Brahma) and they were required to travel constantly to beg, not to take more than one meal from any house-holder and not to stay more than one night in any village. They take only one meal during the day time.

The followers of the Mahima cult believe in the invocation and adoration of "the Eternal, Un-

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* A short history of this cult has been published in the Utkal Dipika dated 1.6.1867.

* A section of Hindu Brahmin opposed the spread of this cult at Jajpur. See Utkal Dipika dated 6.9.1873.

searchable and Immutable Being who is the creator and preserver of the Universe". He is **Alekha, Anakara** and **Anadi** (without description, without shape and without beginning. The aim of the cult is to unite all on the common platform of **Sunya Sadhana** or the worship of the Void.

In the 19th century the Mahima cult spread throughout Orissa eventhough there was a powerful force to counteract it, especially the Christian missionaries and orthodox Hindus. In the official records one important event has been recorded regarding an attack on the Jagannath temple by some of the so-called followers of the Mahima cult.

I am quoting below an extract from the work "Bengal under the Liutenant Governors-Vol-II-PP 733-735," "Attack on the temple of Jagannath in Puri by fanatics".

"Bengal Under Lieutenant Governors Vol. II-PP. 733-735"

Attack on the temple of Jagannath in Puri by fanatics.

"Intimation was received by the Commissioner of Orissa on the 9th March, 1881 that a party of fanatics, consisting of 12 men and 3 women, had entered the Temple of Jagannath in Puri on the 1st diem, with the object of burning the idol of Jagannath and that a disturbance had taken place, in which one of the fanatics has lost his life. The party in question were residents of

Sambalpur in the Central Provinces, and they stated that they were induced to come to Puri in consequence of one of their "Guru", an invisible being without shape or form, to bring the images of Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra out of the temple and to burn them on the road. For the purpose of carrying this order into effect, a large body of men and women left their homes in Sambalpur, taking their children with them, but when within a few miles of Puri, 12 men and 3 women separated themselves from the main body and preceded them to the temple.

The disturbances formed the subject of an immediate investigation by the local authorities, from which the following facts were collected.

One of the door keepers of the temple, who was on duty at the Lion gate when the disturbance occured, in describing the scene, stated that about 12 men and 3 women who were almost in a state of nudity, came up to the temple shouting "Alekha" "Alekh". They had with them an earthen pot containing cooked rice of which, judging from the state of their hands, they had evidently only recently partaken. The door keeper tried to prevent them from entering the temple by closing the gate, but they succeeded in pushing it open and forcing their way into the building accompanied by some 200 pilgrims. One of the fanatics still held in his hand the pot of rice, but on being

remonstrated with by the door-keeper, he consented to leave it outside and was then permitted to enter. The party next proceeded to break down the door of the Bhogamandap, the apartment in which the offerings of the worshippers of the idols are usually displayed, but which was at the time empty. They then made their way into the great hall of the temple in front of the shirine, the crowd of spectators having by this time doubled. Finding the door called Jaibijai shut, the fanatics went out into the enclosure and rushed about like mad men and women, endeavouring to find an entrance in some other direction. The crowd of pilgrims at this time was estimated to number upwards of 1000, and a great deal of pushing and struggling took place, in the midst of which one of the fanatics fell or was pushed on to the stone pavement. He was lifted up by some of his companions and was assisted out of the temples and shortly after expired.

The rioters were arrested by the police and were placed on their trial on charges framed under section 147 and 297 of the Penal Code before the Deputy Magistrate of Puri, and on conviction were each sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment.

Shortly after the arrest of the party of fanatics above referred to, the Assistant Superintendent of Police learnt that a second party were on their road to Puri, with a similar object in view, and

he accordingly sent out a patrol and caused them to be arrested before they culd enter the town and do any mischief. This second party consisted of 6 men, 11 women and 11 small children. The adults were placed on their trial as persons having no ostensible means of subsistence, but they were acquitted by the Deputy Magistrate on the grounds that they were in the same position as hundreds of other beggers, and that there was nothing in their case to raise a suspicion that they earned their livlihood by improper means.

The rioters being inhabitants of Sambalpur, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces was asked to favour the Lieutenant Governor with information regarding their place of residence, habits, and pursuits. In compliance with this request, the Chief Commissioner furnished the following particulars :—

"There is a peculiar sect of Hindu dissenters in the Sambalpur district, known as Kumbhupatias. The word Kumbhupatia is derived from "Kumbhu", the name of a kind of tree, and "Pat", the bark of a tree, and the sect is so called because its followers make ropes from the bark of the tree and wear them round waists. The religion is also known as that of Alekh, and its followers claim revelation as its foundation. Alekhswamy, the god incarnate used, it is said, to reside in the Himalays, but about the year 1864 he came to Malbaharpur in Banki, Zilla. Cuttack and revealed

the religion professed by the Kumbhupatias to 64 persons, the principal of whom was Govinda Das : and it is chiefly owing to the exertions of these disciples that the religion was propagated. Alekhswamy, (which signifies "the lord whose attributes cannot be described in writing") removed to Dhenkanal, a feudatory State, where, for 3 years immediately proceding his death, he led the life of a mendicant and wanderer. Although the religion originated in Cuttack, it spread more rapidly in the district of Sambalpur, and men of all classes and castes except the Uriya Brahmins are freely embracing it. It is not so much the peculiarity of the rules of any particular caste or sect that tends to increase the number of converts to it as the position in life of the converts themselves : thus in Binda the people of a whole village embraced the Kumbhupatia religion because the Gaontia had done so. The names of some 30 villages are given as those in which the Kumbhupatias chiefly reside". A full account of their sects, tenets and habits was added. ⁕

The judgement of the Magistrate who tried the case of attack on the temple of Jagannath has been preserved in the Record Room of Board of Revenue, Orissa. The incident occured on the 1st March, 1881. In fact when Bhima Bhoi established his headquarters at Khaliapali near Sonepur

⁕ The news was published in the Utkal Dipika Vol XVI Dt. 16. 3. 1881.

a large number of people of various castes and creeds including some fanatics used to assemble in his Asrama to listen to his Bhajans. These fanatics who were not the true followers of **Mahima Cult** who raided the Jagannath temple with the object of destroying the image of Jagannath. But the attack was not made by the true followers of the cult nor Bhima Bhoi was himself present in the raiding party. Though historically the incident of attack on the Jagannath temple is correct, it is entirely wrong to believe that the attack was made by the true followers of the Mahima cult.



Bhima Bhoi and Mahima Cult

Dr. Harishchandra Das

Bhima Bhoi, an eminent saint poet and one of the greatest mendicant exponents of Mahima religion. appeared like a comet in the religious and literary harizon of Orissa in the middle of the 19th century. This obscure poet left for the posterity a new religion based on high morality. His numerous devotional lyrics in simple and lucid but forceful Oriya language depicting the essence of Mahima religion appealed the people of all castes and creed and thousands followed him looking at him as their saviour. It is an admitted and established fact that his preaching of Mahima cult through his writings acted as a pain balm to the people in the troubled society. His missionary campaign against the worship of gods and goddesses and against the social and religious superstitions was appreciated even by the devotees of other sects.

The life history of such a prophet bestowed with poetic genius is shrouded in obscurity. In the absence of detailed historical account, the scholars have attempted to reconstruct his life history from the available legends, Sri Nagendra Nath Basu was perhaps the first scholar to throw some light on Bhima Bhoi. Sri Basu on the basis of palm

leaf manuscript entitled Kali Bhagabat narrates the life history and other connected facts in the following manner. This particular manuscript has not yet been brought to light. The manuscript states that Bhima Bhoi was born in a poor Kondh family at Joronda under the Ex-State of Dhenkanal. He was born blind and his full name was Bhimasena Bhoi Arakhita Das: He earned his living by serving in his neighbours house but was always devoted to God. In this way twenty-five years of his life passed. Life became intolerable. Despite his sincere devotion when God did not redress his sufferings he was determined to commit suicide. One day while going out he fell down in a well where he remained for complete three days. People of the locality attempted to persuade him to come out. But he paid no heed to them, At last he was graced by God Mahima Gosain who appeared before him and made him to regain his lost eyes. He ordered him to preach. His favourite Alekh Dharma, write books on the religion and beg food (cooked) for him from the villagers. In accordance with the order of God he started preaching Mahima Dharma, writing books on the cult and begged food for his living. People looked down upon him and they even did not forget to oppress him. Having been disgusted he proceeded towards Kapilas hill. On the way God appeared and out of anger dragged him to joronda where he initiated him once again. After this incident Bhima Bhoi got married

and led a peaceful married life.

Dr. N. K. Sahu writes in his article 'Bhima Bhoi' published in Mahima Dharma Darsan in the following manner. "The famous santha poet Bhima Bhoi was born of obscure parentage in the middle of the 19th century. His followers usually refer to his miraculous origin and a few of them who have some intimate knowledge about the saint report that a blind baby, who in later life came to be known as Bhima Bhoi, was found obserted in a plam grove outside the village Jatasingha by a Khond couple Danara and Gurubari. Jatasingha is located in the Birmaharajpur Police Station of Bolangir District. Danara died shortly after that and the young Gurubari had to marry again the brother of the deceased husband, He was Dhaneswar, an agricultural labourer, in the village Kandhara in Rairakhol Subdivision of the present Sambalpur district. Gurubari shifted to her new house at Kandhara with the boy Bhima. Very soon he became the mother of two children and Bhima was then subjected to step motherly treatment. The blind and neglected boy suffered untold misery during his early childhood.

Biswanath Baba editing a number of scattered legends found out historicity of the facts centering round the life history of Bhima Bhoi. Late Artaballav Mohanty has written in the introductions Stutichintamani that Bhima Bhoi was born in 1855 in a Kandh family of Rairakhol. Until the

real facts relating to the life sketch is traced out we shall have to a great extent base our discussion on the legends and other correlated facts. It is an established fact that Bhima was born in a Kandh family and passed a miserable life during his childhood till the age of fourteen. He himself has described of his untold misery in his famous manuscript 'Stuti Chintamani' : "My father left me deserted after my brith. Healthy and happy life how can I have, even though I want. In this way eleven years of my life passed. From the age of twelve, time passed in the forest with cattle." This indicates that he had a miserable life at least up to the twelve years of his age.

At this time the cycle of his life turned from darkness to light. He fortunately came in touch with Mahima Gosain who attained perfection in the Kapilas hill. While going round his missionary tour he graced this neglected boy in whom he found the hidden genius. The meeting of Gosain with Bhima Bhoi was a great event in the history of Mahima religion. Mahima Gosain during his missionary tour in Utkal visited Khuntuni at Athagarh, Damana, Darutheng and Andharua of Khurda, Malabiharpur of Banki and several places of Dhenkanal and Cuttack and established centres of Mahima religion many of which are still in existence. He almost all along accompanied his dear disciple Gobinda Baba, who in his book 'Satya

Mahimadharma Pratipadak (Part-I) describes the meeting of God Gosain with Bhima Bhoi. In an auspicious night God Mahima swami appeared in the Asram of Balasinga where Gobinda Baba was taking rest with his disciples and called him to come out. With due regard Gobinda Baba asked Mahima Gosain "Why God appeared at such a time ?" "God—I have come to grace Bhima Bhoi. Please come with me. Both of them arrived at the poor cottage of Bhima Bhoi in the village Gramadiha of RairhKhol. God knocked at the door and asked him to come out. Bhima Bhoi expressed his inability to see him as he was blind. He regained his eye-sight by the grace of Mahima Swami. He told him that he could see Him and due to his good action in his past life God not only graced him but also gave him the power of writing devotional songs and poems and preaching the Mahima Dharma. This miraculous event which turned Bhima Bhoi a saint poet had a tremendous effect on the followers of the Mahima dharma in later years.

Some scholars are of opinion that Bhima Bhoi was initiated at Joranda in Dhenkanal. But he has never mentioned of the facts in any of his books. This fact connot be accepted as it is not based on any reliable event. It has been proved that Bhima Bhoi spent his devoted life in the village of 'Khaliapali' near Sonepur and renounced the worldly life in 1895. His tomb is still visible in

his village. Near to it is found the tombs of his wife and his two copiests— Harihar Panda and Basudev Panda who also passed away in the same place. The village so mentioned is located near the bank of Mahanadi. Bhima Bhoi himself has mentioned in his poems.

Mahima Gosain the founder of Mahima religion occupies a distinguished place in the religious history of India. He left behind a religion befitting to the age. The real name of Mahima Gosain is not known. The term Mahima Gosain (Prophet of Glory) was perhaps endowed on him by his beloved devotees. The religion he preached is known as Mahima Dharma or Alekha Dharma (the cult of void). Some scholars consider this new cult as the derivative form of Mahayan. Since this cult was evolved in modern times it is natural and possible to imbibe the essence of other religions that flourished in this region through ages.

Viswanath Baba, one of the most favourite and learned disciples of Mahima Dharma has written in his book that Mahima Gosain after years of severe penance in obscured places appeared first in 1826 at Puri. He perhaps thought Srikshetra to be the appropriate place for propagation of Mahima cult. But the vehement opposition of the Pandas of Jagannatha throw him back to the unsophisticated places untouched by the modern civilization.

The untiring labour of Mahima Gosain the organisational capacity with missionary zeal of Govinda Baba and the inspiring but simple devotional songs and poems of Bhima Bhoi made the Mahima religion popular in Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal of Orissa and attracted thousands of followers. At this critical juncture the demise of Govinda Baba a great preacher and organiser in 1867 at Daruthenga near Khandagiri was a great blow on the newly developing religion and a great shock to Bhima Bhoi who sought him as a source of inspiration. Despite severe opposition from the followers of other sects the cult spread over Banki, Tigiria, Baramba, Narsinghpur, Athagarh, Dhenkanal and other adjoining places. But Gosain had to face formidable opposition after the death of Govinda Baba. A group of people who vehemently opposed Mahima religion submitted a petition to T. E Ravenshaw, the then Commissioner of Orissa stating the false fact that Mahima Gosain seduced the ladies of respectable families to become nuns. As a result, police chased him. Mahima Gosain had to escape to Keonjhar and died at Kamakshyanagara in 1876. His death closed an important chapter of Mahima religion. This was great blow on Bhima Bhoi who looked to him as Brahma whose inspiration only made him a poet and saint.

Bhima Bhoi thought himself alone in upholding the cause of Mahima Dharma. The deliberation

of the council soon after the demise of Great soul, a meeting of the council was held at Joranda for organisation of the institute. Hence he concentrated himself in preaching of Mahima cult through his books from his own village of Khalliapali. He consolidated his band of followers and made the Khalliapali Asrama as the centre of learning and culture of Mahima Dharma. His consort Annapurna remained in charge of organisation of the Asrama.

The great saint—poet who heralded a new epoch in history of Oriya literature passed away in 1896 leaving behind a great tradition for the future generation. His life in the true sense of the term was a life of experiment of a new spirit which had its appeal to the fragmented society.

As has been stated earlier, Mahima Dharma made its appearance in the middle of the 19th century. After the conquest of Orissa by the British in 1803 the Christian missionaries made headway in preaching the Christianity in the Hindu society. It acted in certain parts of the state as a healing balm. Many people mistook Mahima Dharma as the Christianity because it had certain similarity with that of Christian religion. Bhima Bhoi has mentioned this in his stuti Chintamani. "People are scolding us Christian. To utter Alekha, you are giving untold sufferings. We will die one day. Why shall we accept Christianity ? None will carry us nor will cremate us, we will become moth."

The statements in poetic forms indicate the attitude of people towards Mahima and Christian religions. Since the Mahima Dharma has some similarity with that of Christian philosophy and appeared at a time when the latter was in the process of organisation, it is but natural for the people to wrongly identify it with the Christian religion. The Christian missionaries while preaching their religious philosophy to the depressed Oriyas realized the importance of the Mahima philosophy and did not confront to it. This fact is further substantiated by the discussion of Mahima Gosain with the Christian missionaries.

In the middle of the 19th century when other sects were dissipated and lost importance in the graded society, chri stianity and Mahima religion appeared simultaneously to heal the people from sufferings. Mahima religion acted as the parallel religion to that of Christianity. Devotion is the main essence of Christianity and the preachers of this religion are called the Messiah or the sons of God. Similarly devotion is the essence of Mahima cult. Both the faiths acted miraculously to the people of depressed class who were looked down upon by the high caste Hindus. Under the circumstances the two religions appealed first to the tribals living in the inaccessible parts of the Gadjat areas. Both cults are against the worship of Gods and Goddess. In this context the quotat on from Jewist scriptures runs as follows.

"Thou shalt have no otheer Gods, before me. Thou shall not make unto thee any graven images, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven of above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth." (Jewish Scriptures-EX, XX. 3. It is believed that by the worship of Gods and Goddesses the devotees cannot properly regard Parama Brahma. It is said, "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my food-stool. Where is the house that we build unto me and where is the place of my seat ? He who resignes himself to him, the greatest of all, he teaches also his creatures to know him as the greatest yacua. (Jewish Scriptures).

Mahima religion is perhaps the latest flurosence in Orissa. Since it made its appearance in the modern period, it was natural to imbibe the essence of different other religions. Detailed study of this religion and its exponents will show how great and noble the philosophy is. Mahima Goswami being aware of the need of time implanted this faith among the people.

Now I deem it necessary to discuss in short Bhima Bhoi's Mahima philosophy. His poetic excells others of his age. His numerous devotional songs in lucid and simple language which attracted the mass so deeply made him so great in the history of Oriya literature. He occupies an unique place in the literary field of Orissa. Mahima cult could

not have been so popular and appealing without his preaching through his sentimental poems. Many of his waitings are in manuscript forms the publication of which will render an invaluable service to the literature as well as the followers of Mahima religion. The Prachi Samiti under the able guidance of late Artaballav Mohanty has published some manuscripts which render important contribution. The important of the published books is the Stuti Chintamani. Four of of his Gita—Srutinisedha Gita, Brahmanirupana Gita, Adyanta Gita and the Astaka Bihari Gita contain the theological teaching of Mahima cult. Many of his manuscripts have not yet been recovered. Still many recovered by the Orissa State Museum, have been well-preserved and attempt is being made to publish them.

The philosophical thought of Bhima Bhoi have been expressed through his Gitas, Chautisas and Bhajans. The manuscript 'Nirbeda Sadhana' reviewed by Sri P.C. Rout in the Journal of the Kalinga Historical Research Society exhivits the superb poetic talent of Bhima Bhoi and philosophy of Mahima cult. The manuscript while expressing the poetic imagery, philosophy aims at heralding a new order in the traqulated society. The major part of the manuscript deals with exposition of religion and the way of practising the precepts.

The Mahima philosophy was against the worship of gods and idols in Hinduism and against other

social and religious superstitions. The new religious order based on ethical discipline envisaged by the Mahima Gosain was clarified by Bhima Bhoi in his manuscript "Nirveda Sadhana". He was against the Hindu caste system but prescribes a new caste order determined by moral and ethical discipline. He divides the people into 'six. classes viz. Raja, Deva, Vedanta, Gopya, Muni and Brahma. Those who aspire wealth and lead luxurious lives come under Raja group and persons incluined to dance, music and other fine arts form the Deva class. The vedan'is remain confined to sacred texts and religious descussions. The Gopyas violate the rules when necessary and do not show much inclination to religious abservances. Those who strictly adhere to the precepts of Guru come under the Muni class. The Brahma class of people concentrate their mind on Mahasunya and uttar the name of Arupa Brahma at sunrise and sunset. They consider everything in the universe equal. The last group is considered to be the best of all.

The Guru has been given the primoridal place in the Mahima philosophy. The devotee is to praise under the instructions of the Gurus, and beg his food from all types of people considering all equal. Eighteen chapters of this book deal with the lenets of the Mahima cult.

Bhima Bhoi is stated to have preached what he learnt from Mahima Swami. His contribution towards the entichment of Mahima philosophy is evidently noteworthy and even excels other prophets of this land.



Bhima Bhoi : The Greatest Adibasi Poet–Prophet.

Bhagirathi Nepak

Mahima Dharma is one of the most recent religious cults of the World. It originated in the soil of Orissa. Bhima Bhoi is regarded as the greatest poet and prophet of this Dharma. He belonged to the Kandha tribe.

Althrough the founder of Mahima Dharma was Mahima Gosain, and Bhima Bhoi, the inspired propounder poet of the 19th century, because of his popularity he is wholly identified by the poeple with the Mahima Dharma. His devotional lyrics in Oriya are well known throughout the length and breadth of Orissa and also outside. His devotional prayers are sung not only by the followers of Mahima Dharma, but also by others.

The followers of Mahima Dharma do not believe in idol worship nor do they accept the caste system of the Hindus. There is only a code of conduct prescribed for its followers, both for saints and worldly men. The disciples of Mahima Dharma believe that Mahima Gosain is a divine being and was the incarnation of Supreme Brahma who came to this world to raise the Hindu religion from the

state of degeneration. He is believed to have descended from the eternal space.

Mahima Gosain : It is mentioned in the history of Alekh Mahima Dharma that Mahima Gosain first appeared at Puri in 1826. In 1838 he came to Kapilas Hills near Dhenkanal and spent 24 years there in meditation. He attained 'Siddhi' there in 1862 and thereafter started his missionary tour. The personal life i. e. his name, place of birth etc. are still unknown.

Towards the last 14 years (1862 A.D. to 1876 A.D.) of his life, Mahima Gosain was busy in propagation with Baba Govinda Das, who like his Guru Mahima Gosain, possessed divine powers. Due to their sincere efforts, the religion had spread widely. Mahima Gosain and his disciples preached pure monotheism of the Vedanta or Upanishad.

Bhima Bhoi : The greatest Poet-Prophet : During his missionary tour, Mahima Gosain met Govinda Baba, a great organiser in the village Balasingha near Baudh and converted him to Mahima Dharma. From Balasingha they both came to the village Kankanapada near Rairakhol and met Bhima Bhoi.

Bhima Bhoi, although a poor cowherd at that time, had a good reputation for his original lyrical compositions. He was composing songs for the public. He was a born poet and a good singer too.

His chautisas depicting love theme of Radha and Krishna in Vaishnabi style are the glaring examples of his earlier poetic faculties, Such type of compositions were abandoned after he was converted to Mahima cult.

Mahima Gosain made this Kandha boy conscious of his great potential genius and inspired him to compose and sing songs of 'Alekha' the Divine, for the betterment of the mankind. Bhima Bhoi obeyed his Guru. At an early age of 16, he became renouned as a great poet. Four sincere disciples, namely, Hari panda, Basudev Panda, Dharmananda and Markanda were engaged in taking down the songs dictated by him.

Thus, Bhima Bhoi became the greatest exponent of the Mahima cult. He had the 'Darshan' and 'blessings' of the Guru Mahima Gosain. He writings are, therefore, the only original source materials of Mahima Dharma available at present. It is treated as original, authentic and real. It provides consistent, co-herent and whole picture of the religion and its founder Mahima Gosain.

Bhima Bhoi is called the first poet of Mahima Dharma, because it was he who first kept the notes in original that came out of his meetings with Mahima Gosain, and this was possible only due to the sincere help rendred by Hari Panda, Basudev Panda Dharmananda and Markanda. Hence these four scribes may be taken as four

strong pillers of Mahima Dharma, whereas, Bhima Bhoi together with Mahima Gosain form the body and life of this Dharma.

Bhima Bhoi was born in a Kandha family of Jatasingha, a village near Birmaharajpur of ex-Sonepur State. He suffered a lot in his childhood and youth. He lost his father 'Danara' soon after his birth and his mother "Gurubari" remarried 'Dhaneswar', the brother of her deceased husband according to the prevailing customs amongst Kandha tribe. She gave birth to two children by Dhaneswar after her remarriage, and as such, Bhima Bhoi had to live a neglected life. This sorrowful life has been pathetically described by Bhima Bhoi in his 'Stuti Chintamani'. He left home when he was seven years old and lived upon begging. At the age of 12, he was appointed as cowherd by one Charitanya Pradhan, a rich farmer of Kankanapada. During this period he met Mahima Gosain. It was in the year 1862.

Bhima Bhoi, the poet-prophet had to face various difficulties and discomforts and to swallow insults and humiliations while propagating the new Mahima cult. But he did not lose patience and worked till last. He devoted his entire life in preaching Mahima cult and in giving initiation to new comers. He believed in it and worked for its propagation till his end.

The death of Govinda Baba, the organiser in 1867 at Daruthenga and Mahima Gosain in 1876 at

Joranda greatly shocked Bhima Bhoi as he used to look upon them as the incarnation of 'Lord Jagannath of Puri' and 'Sunya Brahma' respectively.

Bhima Bhoi attended Mahima Mahasabha summoned at Joranda, near Dhenkanal immediately after the death of Mahima Gosain. It was his first visit to Joranda. He pleaded there that not only Sadhu (saint) but also the sincere Gruhi (house holder) followers of the cult should be granted right to propagate the religion. He also advocated that, the female—followers should be granted equal rights like the males in Mahima Dharma. But Bhima Bhoi was not satisfied with the decissions arrived at the General Body meeting and decided to organise a parallel institution after his own idealism. He returned to the village Khaliapali of ex-Sonepur State and made this village the centre of his religious activities. Thus his 'Ashram' in Khaliapali came to existence in 1876.

Attack on Jagannath Temple : In 1880, 12 men and 3 women of Mahima Dharma had been to Puri to demonstrate against idol-worship. While they entered into the Jagannath temple to destroy the Lord's image the Pandas fought against them vigorously. One of the Kumbhapatias met with spot death. The mission was not fulfilled. This incident has been wrongly linked up with Bhima Bhoi by some of the ill-informed critics.

Bhima Bhoi started his career in Mahima Dharma as a saint, but afterwards he left the saintly life

and embraced the pious house-holder's (Gruhi) life at Khaliapali. It is said that a beautiful, sobre, pious and unmarried young girl 'Arnapurna' by name, residing on the other side of the river Mahanadi, had a dream from some unknown power and left her parents alone to join with Bhima Bhoi the poet-prophet at Khaliapali. She was from a Baishnaba family of western Orissa and not from Brahmin family as narrated by many critics. Bhima Bhoi had also a similar type of dream and was ordered by his 'Guru' to welcome the lady who will be coming to him very soon. Bhima Bhoi remembered the dream and admitted Arnapurna into his Ashram. She was a spiritual consort to him all through her life and was called 'Ma-Arnapurna' by the ashramities. Including Arnapurna, Bhima Bhoi had 4 lady companions. They were Arnapurna, Sumedha, Saraswati and another unknown lady. Of these ladies, Arnapurna was liked most not only by Bhima Bhoi but also by the Ashramities.

Bhima Bhoi declared in his writings in strong and straight forward way that there is no difference between Mahima saint and a sincere Mahima Gruhi Bhakta. He maintained the same status for both. He himself practised it during his life time. Although he was acting as a Gruhi Bhakta (house-holder follower), he was doing the work of a 'Guru' by preaching Mahima cult and initiating thousands of other people into Mahima cult.

In 1892, Bhima Bhoi had two children one son and a daughter, Kapileswar and Lavanyabati by name. The daughter Lavanyabati was elder to the son Kapileswar by 2 months. Kapileswar was born deaf, dumb and lame. After Bhima Bhoi and Ma-Arnapurna, Lavanyabati was managing the Khaliapali temple. She did some improvement work of the temple and spent a most pious life. Lavanyabati and Kapileswar died in the year 1935-36.

Out of the many granthas of Bhima Bhoi, (1) Stuti Chintamani, (2) Nirbeda Sadhana, (3) Adi Anta Gita, (4) Astaka Behari Gita, (5) Brahma Nirupana Gita, (6) Padma Kalpa, (7) Bhajànamala, (8) Brahma Chalaka, (9) Chautisha, and (10) Bangala Athabhajana, have been published so far.

Out of all his published works, Stuti Chintamani is regarded as the best composition of the poet-prophet. This is also the most original and authentic document of Mahima Dharma.

It is stated by many critics that, Bhima Bhoi was born in 1850 and died in 1895. Samadhi temples were constructed for each member of his family at Khaliapali. Bhima Bhoi and Arnapurna have been given samadhi side by side in the highest temple. Their samadhis are surrounded by the samadhis of Kapileswar, Lavanyabati, Haripanda, Basudev Panda, Sumedha and Saraswati.

The Samadhi temple of Khaliapali is regarded as sacred as 'Joranda' and is attracting thousands of people throughout the year.



Bhima Bhoi and Devotion

Dr. S. C. Panda

Bhakti or devotion is considered as intense love for God. This love in the highest form amounts to complete self-surrender to God, without the slightest of desire for any personal gain. Three factors are considered to be important for Bhakti. The first criteria is that there should not be any fear or differentiation between self and the God. The next factor is that there should not be any bartering with the Lord. Any idea of give and take between devotee and the Lord amounts to shop keeping and ultimately turns out to be a begger's religion. But a devotee should not beg any favour from the Lord. Naturally the Third factor is love for the sake of love only towards God.

In the Bhakti cult 'Guru or Preceptor, 'Istha' or Chosen ideal God are considered to be one and the same. The intense love for Guru or God is usually accompanied by complete cessation of selfish desire on the part of the devotee and the devotee remains contended under all circumstances, good or bad, taking it each to be a blessing of the Lord, as a result of which, complete self surrender to God is achieved. This is a reason why most of the devotees have got very little comforts during their life time and they spend

most of their time in chanting the name of the Lord and having complete devotion to God.

In the life of Sri Bhima Bhoi,all the above qualities are glaringly exhibited. Sri Bhima Bhoi was probably born blind or developed blind-ness of both eyes in his early child-hood. By the grace of God, his would-be-Guru came to him and blessed him with vision. But, lest eye-sight will drag him to worldly ways of life, he again preferred blind-ness and prayed to his Guru to make him blind again. Sri Bhima Bhoi was born and brought-up in straightened circumstances, not even having two morsel of food each day. This continued through-out his life, but this did not have any effect on the devotions of Sri Bhima Bhoi and he had un-interrupted remembrance of God. His work "Stuti Chintamani" reveals a great deal of his personal character with love towards God and all his creation and malice towards none. Even he has prayed to God that it is immaterial if he goes to Hell but let every body in the World be red-eemed. He has further prayed that because he has realised the human sufferings in his own life, he is unable to bear such sufferings in others and beseach God to bless the man-kind, in general.

Although he was an illiterate from his birth, he became a 'Sidha' or perfected Soul, by the grace of his Guru and such instances of sudden perfection in persons are not rare in the annals of the religion history of India. By the grace of his

Guru he could compose poems in-praise of the Lord. The total works of Sri Bhima Bhoi has been composed to a huge volume. As stated earlier in the criteria Bhakti, it is seen from the life of Sri Bhima Bhoi that he had no fear in his life and was moving about singing the prayer of the Lord through-out Orissa. He had never the slightest desires of self seeking and he was living a plain life with very little of material comforts. But all the same he had immense feeling for the suffering of others for which he was constantly praying to God to redress the miseries of others. As his life was full of compassion for the entire creation, he had not even the slightest re-action to those who had tried to scandalise and harm him. It will be relevent here to quote a story about love to God for the sake of love without expecting any return. "Once sage Narada had a pride that he is a great Bhakta of Lord and to confirm this he went to Lord Krishna. On reaching Dwaraka, to his utter surprise, he found Lord Sri Krishna was groaning in pain due to severe head-ache. Sage Narada meekly and respectfully asked the Lord to disclose the remedy for his head-ache and assured him that he, as his Bhakta, will leave no stone up-turned to procure the remedies. The Lord disclosed that if the holy dust of some devotee is rubbed on his fore-head, the pain will go. Then sage Narada replied that it is a very sac-religious act to take the dust of the feet of a devotee and rub the same on the fore-head of the God Himself and regretted

to give the dust of his feet. Then Lord Srikrishna asked him to go to Brundaban & see if some devotee among the Gopies will give the dust of their feet. Accordingly Narada went to Brundaban and when he narrated the head-ache of Lord Srikrishna to the Gopies including Smt. Radha, all of them burst into tear. On hearing the remedies suggested by sage Narada, they all gladly collected the dust of their feet in a vessel and requested Narada to hurry with the dust and cure Lord Srikrishna as early as possible. At this, sage Narada warned them of the sacreligious act that they were doing by giving the dust of their feet to be applied in the fore-head of the Lord and in consequence to such act they will have to stay in hell for 700 births. He also pitied the follishness of these cowherd girls. On hearing the words of Narada the Gopies were furious and told Narada that he should immediately proceed and cure the head-ache of the Lord Srikrishha by rubbing the holly dust of their feet on the fore-head of the Lord and further stated that they were prepared to go to hell for seven milion births, what to speak of 700 births, if such act will cure the Lord's headache." This revealls that, love for their Lord was to see their Lord happy in all circumstances and

their own personal consideration of going to hell or heaven is of secondary importance This is what is called love for the Lord for love sake. Sage Narada was ashmed of him-self and narrated the real facts to Lord Srikrishna in all humility.

Such instances of devotion of Lord in the life of Sri Bhima Bhoi are not rare. We can really praise Sri Bhima Bhoi if we can take a few teachings of Sri Bhima Bhoi, one of the greatest devotee to God, and put his teachings in practice in our own life.



A Poet of the People

Mangalu Charan Biswal, M.A.

Orissa has given birth to remarkable persons in every walk of life since its inception. We can find a huge crowd of names in the pages of history. But to our utter helpless-ness, we know very little of them. We have one 'Bhima' in our great epic Mohabharat, but we have three outstanding Bhimas in our Oriya literature. One was 'Bhima Dhibar' who wrote "KAPATAPASHA", a poetical work, and the second was 'Bhima Dash' of "Bhakti Ratna Bali", and the third Bhima was 'Bhima Bhoi' who gave "Stuti Chintamani", an autobiographical poetic work. It is not easy to fix up the exact date of Bhima's birth. Some critics say that he was born in the year 1855 A. D. According to some others, he was born in any year between 1850 A.D. to 1860 A.D. It was agreed by many critics that Bhima Bhoi passed through the door of darkness in the year 1895 and his living family members speak that, he died in a mature age. So one can easily believe that he was born during the third decade of 19th. century.

It is difficult to collect the biogrophical facts of the most interesting nature and of clear significance of a poet like Bhima Bhoi. Many legends surround

Bhima's birth. Some believe that Bhima was not of woman born. He was picked up and brought up by a Kondha (one of the Primitive tribes) couple. He came, what others say, in the incarnation of a sage. Devotees of Mahima religion believe that Bhima was a great reformer who brought a religious and social change. He ranks with the most towering figures in the field of religion. His thoughts and sayings we may have from his vast literary field which is represented by about thousand of Bhajans. It has not yet been possible to get a simple and compact form of life and work of Bhima Bhoi. Now we know him as a great poet and a brilliant preacher of Mohima Dharma. Mohima Swami became a part of him and merged in him.

It is not easy to present Bhima Bhoi as he was. He is a moving spirit, now people feel, in every great or little philanthropic organisation known as Mohima Gadi. He had a spiritual insight and realisation. His God was formless but rich with attributes, Ftom the jumble of facts and fiction we know a little of Bhima Bhoi. For a century, he was not recognised as an acomplished man of Orissa. His life runs as : He was born in the village Gramdiha of Rairakhol sub-division. His father was Janardan Bhoi, locally known as Danar and his mother was Sebari. He lost his father when he was only of three years. His mother remarried his uncle and thus he became an orphan. He was

made a servant to a pious farmer known as Chaitan Pradhan of Kankanpara. From the age 7 to 16 he was engaged in looking after a cattle. The severity of this part of life infused a poetic faculty in him. Whatever may be the fact, Bhima Bhoi was not illiterate. He threw himself into the study of various books like Oriya Bhagabat, Bidagdha Chintamani and other old Oriya books. Poetry, as we know, is the best way to expose ideas and ideals. He had a tender, creative and responsive sagacity. The music from alaround stirred him and gave him unearthly sense of unseen realities which brought the wider nearer to him. His poetic career began from the age of sixteen. He was widely known when he was of thirty. People began to flock to his house. Some people became envious of him. They brought many charges against him. To make matters worse, he was removed from his village. As he was a man of lower caste, people of upper caste could not tolerate his high name. But things became easier as he had no dispute with anybody. He always wanted to find a way to God who is Formless and Nameless. He was deaf to the praise and blame of people. He often said, "I have hurt no one's honour. I utter the name of Mahima Goshain and go my own way". When summer is over, the rain sets in. Similarly Bhima Bhoi made up his mind in his later part of life to break from wandering life to test his strength and gather wider experiences of newer life. He married a Bramhin widow ?

and became a father of a child. But he was not a hump-smoking idle vagabond who in the guise of a Sadhu parade the Country, He had a clean heart, a pure life, an open mind, a liberal spirit, a wider out-look and a tender sympathy in him. One can feel that in him Orissa can find a pure poet and a perfect prophet. To have a clean picture of Bhima Bhoi's poetic talent, one has to throw himself into his vast lyrical work. The life of a person like Bhima Bhoi is really great as he tried his best to push aside all that came to block his way. He left us in the year 1895 A.D.

At present, Bhima Bhoi has become an Orissa-wide-figure. The Gadi of Khaliapali reveals him as the founder of many centres of Public Service. His heart bled for the millions of poor and distressed. His total literary work speaks of his message and mission as a whole. He has predicted the future of human race and of the universe. His poetic genius still commands respect and call for more careful study.



MAHIMA DHARMA

Ramesh Chandra Dhall

Mahima Dharma is not only famous as a religion but has become an ideal form of living. This religion is no more confined to Orissa State only. It is found in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. Just like Budhism and Jainesm, Mahima Dharma has its own philosophy and definite conduct of life. Mahima Dharma followers believe that God is all powerful, Parambrahma. Unless He desires nothing takes place in this earth. The air does not blow. The leaf does not fall from the tree. Lot of research is going on about this Dharma. This has drawn the attention of many research scholars and thinkers of the West. No doubt the land which is famous for gods and goddesses very many types of worships, there the ideals of Mahima Dharma must have agitated the minds of the people to a great extent. As a conduct of life, they do not believe in idol-worship and castism. They lead a very simple life. They are far above enjoyment pump and grandeur. They do not accept free meals more than once from a particular individual. All sorts of feasts and functions are forbidden to them. They remain unconcerned to birth and death.

The followers of Mahima or Alekh Dharma get up from the bed early morning. They make regular

prayers in the morning and in the evening. The morning and evening prayers are known as "Saran" and "Dharana" respectively. They pray either in their mother tongue or in Sanskrit. They do not accept the offering made to the Hindu deities. They do not accept food from the rulers, Brahmins, Barbars and washermen as they think them to be the servants of God. They sleep in the open air, and on the ground and put on Kaupin. They pray for the good of the public at large. They observe 32 rules of this type. Each rule is most scientific and benificial to life. There is classification among the disciples of this Dharma.

"Zoranda Gadi" "The Most sacred place for Mahima disciples

The "Zoranda Gadi" is the most religious and welcome place for Mahima disciples. It is situated in the North-East corner of Dhenkanal, 15 miles from Dhenkanal Town, the head quarters of Dhenkanal District. The founder of this Dharma, "Mahima Gosain" spent Major part of his life here. The Samadhi of 'Mahima Gosain'. 'Dhuni' and 'Gadi Mandir' are situated here. Each year during Magha Purnima a great function takes place here at 'Zoranda Gadi'. Disciples from far and near flock to this place. Generally fourty to fifty thousand people assemble here in this august occasion. The disciples account for their activities of the whole year at this time and accordingly they are punished or awarded. The Founder

'Mahima Gosain' established this Gadi before his death.

The Founder Mahima Gosain

No body is sure of the date of birth of the founder nor the caste he belonged to. But from various evidences one can say that he was a sweet spoken and ideal gentleman. He used to wear Kaupin. He used to sleep on the ground and leave on water. He spent most of his time in preaching Mahima Dharma inside the State. He tried to influence and attract others to his religion. He spent nearly 24 years at Kapilash of Dhenkanal. The first twelve years he stayed at Kapilash and spent his life on vegetables and the rest twelve years on milk. The-then-Dhenkanal ruler, late Mahendra Bahadur was his disciple. Mahima Gosain breathed his last at Zoranda. Many of his disciples claim that he is the "Param Brahma".

"Bhima Bhoi" the poet and preacher of Mahima Dharma

Bhima Bhoi was one of the close disciples of Mahima Gosain. He could sing well and had the capacity to compose Bhajana (a type of prayer lyrics). By birth he was a Kandha and from his writings it is revealed that he passed his child-hood and youth through hard poverty. Many people say that he was blind. But there are no proofss to justify such a statement. Scholars differ regarding the date of his birth. He was

born in the village Gramadiha of Redhakhole of Sambalpur District and expired in 1869 in the village Khaliapali of Balangir district. At Khaliapali, Bhima Bhoi had established the Gadi. His samadhi mandira is still there. The disciples used to come to this place to pray their homage during Magha Purnima as they used to go to Zoranda.

His contributions to Oriya literature

It is undisputed that due to his contributions Oriya literature has been enriched to a great extent. He was quite successful in preaching his ideals through literature and in simple language. His Bhajana and Janana are easily recited. In his compositions his philosophy of life and religion are well revealed. In his compositions mystical thoughts and revolutionary ideas are very often found. He has written satires on present establishments. To him an ideal society can only be established through truth and truth only. His call was self-sacrifice for the greatest cause of the humanity.



"Stuti Chintamani"

(BHIMA BHOI)

Translated from the Original Text (15th Boli)
by : **Baikunthanath Senapati, B.A., B. Ed.**

Beginning from the lowly germs
Down to the insects, tiny forms,
And from the Movable to the Mute;
When we keep on, them, perceiving,
Thou pervadest each and every being,
Almost equal and almost absolute (1)

Thou art nearer to the Thought;
If Thoughts lack, Thou appearest not;
Art Thou not charmed ever to be
Subject to the Sense the Devotees bear !
But my prayer, Thou dost not hear,
Why, what anger has possessed Thee ! (2)

To seek the refuge of another Lord,
Have I ever failed in word
And given up my thoughts for Thee !
Or some offence I did commit
At Thy sacred, auspicious feet,
While I served Thee most fervidly ! (3)

Oh, Thou dost not seem to pay
Any heed to what I say,
But makest me suffer without end !
Thou keepest me away from Thee,
And while showing mercy to me,
Some hesitation Thy mind entertained ! (4)

Thou takest no pity on me;
Endless ages are there, I see,
Unwrit, Unborn and Away;
I live as an exile should
In the dreary, thorny wood,
How long wilt Thou make me stay ! (5)

A niggardly man I ever abide;
My hopes are many and unsatisfied;
I am unhappy since my birth;
I am hurt by ill-intent
To attain the Treasure and Accomplishment,
For a bad time prevails on Earth (6)

I do not get my daily food,
Nor for my body, vestment good,
Nor these are got without distress;
Vile and cunning, debased and mean,
To such a creature as I have been,
When wilt Thou show Thy Grace ? (7)

What path following I shall be ?
In what ways I shall worship Thee ?
No wisdom doth now me invest;
I am not a saint of fame,
Nor a man of learning and name,
But, indeed, a temporary guest. (8)

Thou art able to rightly grace;
Thou art able to readily efface,
The fruits of desires in Creatures' heart;
I think of my own accord
In my innermost heart, O Lord,
All my prowess and worth Thou art. (9)

Though Thou art the Master Great,
And bearest the epithet, "Creator" yet,
But all these sayings are in vain;
Thou hast, doubtless, the Body given,
But givest not the "Victuals" even,
How it sounds strange, now and then ! (10)

Thou art the life of Devoted men !
A Taeasure that the Poor attain;
Thou art Infinite and Ocean of Grace;
To help all at the time of woe
And save them from all dangers, so,
My Master is the Friend of the populace. (11)

As a rill of water that flows,
In that manner drawing close,
The yarns in Thy deft control;
Causing Consciousness to rise,
A lasting communion materialise
Between the Supreme Spirit and the Soul. (12)

Satya, Tretaya, Dwapara and Kali,
The Ages that in the Creation be,
Throughout all these Ages Four;
The Earth's burden thou takest away
By Prime Action to keep everything gay,
Like milk mixing with water as we pour (13)

Thou hast formed Thy Gracious Will
To make me all my passions kill
And given me shelter at Thy Feet;
What do I know, a wretched being !
O Lord, Thou knowest every thing,
Whether or not I shall be blest with it ! (14)

Ere the fruit is in the ripened State,
Evil emerges now to nip it yet,
    And leagues are formed for this alone;
As the Pisces from the water, get
Falling into the angler's net,
    Killed for no offence of their own (15)

The wealth of my thoughts complete.
Placing I at Thy Holy Feet,
    Cherish in my mind, ambitions gay;
While, alive, the father resides,
If over the Council, the son presides,
    Lord. what would all the people say ! (16)

I do not seek the monarch's throne;
But in this sage's guise alone,
    Let me pass my embittering days;
For what reason, only for me,
Blame will come, O Lord on thee,
    Why such underserving want of praise ! (17)

I deeply ponder in my mind,
When Illusion diffusing through, I find
    The ways of the world in every State;
Why should I be in turmoil
If the honest ways of toil
    Are not pre-ordained by my fate ! (18)

The pain of loss, the joy of gain,
Both, at the same time, are felt by men,
But these things shall not ever stay;
As do the children gather round
The castles of sand in mirth profound,
Sporting awhile and giving up their play (19)

Thus in the rapture of Love Divine,
With tears flowing from either eyne,
And choked by a feeling of anger bred;
His palm on the bare forehead putting,
Bhima, the Devotee, doth piously sing
A total of couplets Three Hundred. (20)

Notes on Bhima Bhoi

Prafulla Behera

Bhima Bhoi has been widely known as a great exponent of the Mahima cult in Orissa. It is admittedly true to state that no authentic biographical record has yet been maintained to highlight his early life history, though his contribution to the philosophy of a new religious cult has attracted the attention of scholars from the very beginning. To speak in general terms, contradictory statements are often made by several writers as to his parentage, infancy, and blindness. Understandably scholars are not at variance with one another regarding his intellectual attainments, but they are found to have possessed an ambiguous view about his personal life as his early life history is shrouded in obscurity., An attempt is being made here to throw some light on his life along with the polemical issue of his blindness.

According to local tradition and reminiscences of old persons, description of his life history runs thus : Bhima Bhoi was a foster child of a Kandha couple called Danara and Gurubari who belonged to the village Jatesingha under Birmaharajpur police station of Bolangir district. Danara, the adoptive father, once dreamt of a child floating on the village tank, being kept over the lotus. In the next morning the boy was brought by him

from the said tank and reared up in his family. The child was affectionately called Bhima. After the death af Danara, Gurubari married the younger brother of her deceased husband, Dhaneswar by name. In order to earn his livelihood he had to work as a labourer in the village Kandhara in Rairakhol police station of Sambalpur district. Consequently, Gurubari had to shift her residence from Jatesingha to Kandhara with the adopted son Bhima. Bhima was entrusted there to tend the cattle of some cultivators belonging to the village Kankanpada under Rairakhol police station.

It is necessary here to mention that the preacher of Mahima cult known as Mahima Gosain was propagating the Mahima Dharma during that period in Orissa. While he was passing through the village Gramdiha in the Ex-Rairakhol State, he came across Bhima Bhoi who had a deep sense of religious aptitude for Param Brahma—the Supreme Being. He taught him the principles of Mahima Dharma and since then, Bhima Bhoi began to compose religious poems through his blessings.

At that time Basudev Panda and Hari Panda along with others of Banhar village under Attabira police station had been to Mahima Gosain being influenced by this new religious cult. He was pleased to accept them as his devotees after some sort of religious initiation. He advised them to meet Bhima Bhoi so that they would be properly

guided to follow the philosophy of the cult in holistic perspective. And further they were instructed to take down the songs composed by him. Accordingly they were in search of him in a number of places and ultimately met him at Rairakhol. From that time onwards they were attached to Bhima Bhoi as scribes. After the disapperance of Mahima Gosain in 1876 at Joranda, Dhenkanal district, Bhima Bhoi went to Khaliapali situated on the bank of river Ong in course of his journey. He is stated to have settled there in 1877 to preach the tenets of the Mahima cult.

A monastery was built at Khaliapali under the patronage of the Maharaja of Sonepur, Niladhara Singh, who had showed deep regard for Bhima Bhoi. He was said to have lived there for a period of about 18 years, and breathed his last in 1895. According to Sriya Devi, the daughter of Laxman Panda of Banhar village, Attabira, and the present head of the Khaliapali Ashram, a large number of nuns were maintained in the Ashram. Of them five were very important and influential, and were close associates of Bhima Bhoi. These five disciples namely, Annapurna Devi, Rohini Devi, Sumedha Devi,Swaraswati Devi, and Suberna Devi were known to have come from the districts of Bolangir, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal.

Annapurna Devi was a nun in true sense of the term and was leading a life of austerity and moral purity. She was a great spiritual force in the

Ashram. Besides her, Suberna Devi and Swaraswati Devi were also regarded as important religious heads of the Ashram as well. Rohini Devi and Sumedha Devi were his worldly companions and co-wives. Three years before the death of Bhima Bhoi, i. e, in 1892 Lavanyabati was born to Rohini and two months later Kapileswar was born to Sumedha.

Bhima Bhoi is stated to be of medium statured, and his complexion was fair. He had kept some scribes namely Hari Panda, Basudev Panda, Jairam Das, Muralidhara Das, Mohan Das, Ananda Das and Sridhara Das Among them Hari Panda and Basudev Panda were very intimately associated with him. He had composed several religious songs at his leisures, and four scribes were engaged to take down notes simultaneously. Generally, palm leaves were used for writing the religious verses and he used to confine himself within the premises of the Ashram. None was allowed to enter into Ashram without his prior permission. On the full-moon day of Magha (January-February) he used to come out of the Ashram, and appeared before his devotees and public in general. People from far off places gathered there on the occassion. He was in the habit of using wooden sandals, the evidences of which are found till today in the Ashram. The wooden Sandals of Bhima Bhoi and Annapurna Devi have been preserved and are now being worshipped at the western

corner of the Samadhi Mandira of Bhima Bhoi. It is relevant here to state that Samadhi Mandiras of Basudev Panda, Kapileswar, Lavanyabati, Hari Panda and Sumedha Devi are also found to-day within the Ashram premises and thus they bear eloquent testimony to the activities of these associates of Bhima Bhoi.

Enquiry reveals that he was quite strong and stout and never suffered from any communicable diseases. Most probably he was not blind as had been reiterated by some of the writers. He was able to do his normal duties till death. He could recognise persons raising his eyebrows by hands. Otherwise he was not able to see anybody

To sum up, it is difficult to state clearly about the life history of Bhima Bhoi owing to paucity of data at our disposal. A further detailed investigation of the matter may indicate certain latent facts of considerable merit. Tentatively speaking, he was brought up in a Kandha family and later on, was inspired by Mahima cult. Contrary to the opinions of some writers of repute, perhaps Bhima Bhoi was never born blind nor ever had he lost his eye sight. In view of the importance of this matter, a thorough investigation is to be made

to clarify the confusion and misconception as to his blindness. This apart, a detailed study of the available records from the locality may be of great value to visualise his contribution to the perspectives of the Mahima cult and religious literature of Orissa.

● The writer was entrusted to collect data on Bhima Bhoi by the Chief Editor, Revenue (Gazetteers) Department, Orissa, Bhubaneswar. The facts described here are based on observation and interview in Khaliapali village on September 20, 1972. The village is connected by an unmetalled Jeepable road, which approximately measures to be 15 Km., with the Bolangir-Sonepur road at Khameswaripali.

●

Seven-Hooded Snake on MAHIMA TEMPLE

Prof. Prahallad Pradhan

The followers of 'Mahima Sampradaya', though claim to be the worshippers of the 'Alekha' or 'Nirguna Brahma',have constructed several temples at different places. They describe these temples as "Sunya Mandira", 'Samadhi Mandira', 'Dhuni Mandira' etc., but invariably a seven-hooded snake (sapta-pheni-Naga) is placed on the top. With this insignia on the top, they basically differ from the Hindu temples, though they are very much similar to them in structural technique.

What is the significance of this seven-hooded snake ? Why they have adopted this symbol for their temples or what is its relationship with the Mahima cult ?

Alekha Sampradaya in Orissa is of recent origin with distinctive features of its own, though imprints of earlier religions are also traceble in it. Many a follower of the Alekha Sampradaya while laying much stress on similar aspects and terms used in other cults, try to give a new interpretation of Alekha Sampradaya established by revered Mahima Gasain without realising the fact that thereby they belittle Mahima Gosain and Alekha Dharma. That it has its own existence

is established on its own merits and it is popular by its own qualities.

Mahima cult has certain similarities with the other cults of religions India and is not cut off from the main stream of thought. There fore, Bhima Bhoi in his 'Nirveda Sadhana' says.

"ସେ ଯେ ଅନାଦି ଅବଧୂତ, ଧରନ୍ତି ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ମତ ।"

He (Mahima Gosain) is Anadi, Avaduta and holds or adopts different views, and practices from the various religious seets and presents them in 'Mahima cult'.

This was described by me in my article, "ଭୀମ ଭୋଇଙ୍କ ସ୍ତୁତି ଚିନ୍ତାମଣିରେ ନିର୍ବେଦ ସାଧନା" in oriya edition of 'Bhima Bhoi'. I had suggested there in that the seven-hooded snake on the Mahima temples has some allusion to vasuki, the resting place of lord Vishnu in his abode of the ocean of milk. I only suggested some points of interpretation regarding the seven-hooded snake invariably found on Mahima temples.

There after I made several enquiries about it and came in contact with one 'Anadi Baba' of Mahima cult. Anadi Baba explained that lord Vishnu was reclining on the seven or thousand-hooded vasuki (Ananta) and was engaged in his sportive dalliances from the ocean of milk, where as, the same lord Vishnu in the form of Mahima Gosain brings the 'Lila' (Sportive dalliance) from the ocean to the land and spreads the cult on the earth. There-

fore, the seven-hooded snake (Vasuki or Ananta) is placed on Mahima temples.

Keeping a watchful eye on this point I re-read the Mahima Literature of Bhima Bhoi. In stuti Chintamani, he says—

> କ୍ଷୀରସିନ୍ଧୁ ବାସୀ ପ୍ରଭୁ ଅଟ ପରା ପରମ ତୁମ୍ଭର ନାମ
> ଅବ୍ୟକ୍ତ ପରା ଅଟ ଶୂନ୍ୟଦେହୀ ଅନାଦି ଅରୂପ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ।

You are indeed the Lord having abode in the ocean of milk, Supreme is your name, You are embodiment of Sunya or Void and thus indiscernable, You are the Brahman having no beginning and form.

'He' is further said to be the Avatara or incarnation of occean-dwelling God.

> କ୍ଷୀରସିନ୍ଧୁ ବାସୀ ଅନନ୍ତ ଈଶ୍ୱର ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଅବତାର
> ହେଳାକଲେ ଏବେ ଭେଳା ବୁଡ଼ିବ ବେଳ ଥାଉଁ ଆଶ୍ରେକର । 68/3

In a Bhajana he says—

> କ୍ଷୀରସିନ୍ଧୁବାସୀ ଏବେ ମର୍ତ୍ତ୍ୟେ ଆସିହେ
> ଧର୍ମେ ନାଶ ଯାନ୍ତି ସେହୁ ଅବିନାଶୀ ହେ । (122)

Having come to the earth from the ocean of milk, Mahima Gosain become a (supreme) teacher and preacher and gave initiation and instructions which have been referred to in several places—

In a place in Stutichintamani he says :—

> ଏତେ ବଡ଼ ସତ୍ୟ ଧର୍ମ ନାମ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ଭଜ ହେଉଛୁ ବେଅର୍ଥ
> କ୍ଷୀରସିନ୍ଧୁ ବାସୀ ଦୀକ୍ଷା ଦେଉ ଦେଉ ପଶିଯାଉଛ ଅସତ୍ୟ ।
> କ୍ଷୀରସିନ୍ଧୁ ବାସୀ ଗୁରୁ ରୂପ ହୋଇ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି ନ ରହେ ଦୀକ୍ଷା
> ସେ ପ୍ରଭୁଙ୍କ ବାକ୍ୟ ଲଙ୍ଘି ଯାଉଅଛୁ ଶୁଣି ହେଉଛୁ ହାଟଦା ।

Although I adore and worship such a great religion based on truth and whose name is Supreme, every thing is being rendered futile, inspite of the initiation and instructions of the Lord, the dweller of the ocean of milk, I am surprised to hear that his words become ineffective.

Not only the epithet 'Khira-Sindhu-Vasi' of the Vishnu is attributed to Mahima Gosain, other aspects of his life are also alluded to him. At a place in 'Stuti Chintamani' Bhima Bhoi says----

ଗଲ ଝଞ୍ଜେ ଛନ୍ଦି ମଲ ହୋଇ ଦୋଷୀ ସତେ ମୁଁ ନିଶ୍ଚେ
ଅନନ୍ତ ବ୍ରହ୍ମାଙ୍କୁ ଅନାଇ ମୁ ଅଛୁ ଅନୁସର ବଟପୁଟେ ।
କ୍ଷୀରସିନ୍ଧୁ ବାସୀ ବେଗି ବେଗି ଆସି ନାଶ କାଲ ବିପତ୍ତିକି
ଲଗି ଅଛୁ ଫାଶ ଲୋଭରୁ ଏ ପାପ ଜଣାଉଅଛୁ ଏଡକ ।

means, Certainly I am swept away having been sinful and ruined in the complexity of the worldly affairs; therefore, I am looking forward for'Ananta Brahma' in a folding of baniyan leaf. Oh God! I request you to come soon from the ocean of milk and destroy the calamity of death which is caused by sin on account of allurement.

Here, 'Khira-Sindhu-Vasi' is equated with Ananta Brahman or the endless Supreme, Absolute or Endless Summum Bonum and is alluded to Vishnu in his 'Balamukunda' form reclining on a baniyan leaf at the time of great deluge. Further it may be pointed out that 'Ananta' is an epithet of Vishnu Himself and a name of Vasuki on whom he reclines. Similarly Bhima Bhoi has alluded

to Vishnu rescuing the sage Markanda at the time of deluge and equated Him with his preceptor Mahima Gosain.

> ମାରକଣ୍ଡ ଋଷି ଯାଉଥିଲେ ଭାସି ପୃଥୀ ମଗ୍ନା ପ୍ରଳୟରେ
> ଶ୍ରୀଭୁଜ ବଢ଼ାଇ ଦୟାଳତ୍ୱେ ନେଇ ରଖିଲେ ଗର୍ଭ ଭିତରେ (16/2)

In this context he has referred to the 'Nrusimha' incarnation of Vishnu also—

> ହିରଣ୍ୟ ଦୈତ୍ୟ ଯେ ଶତବାର ବଧି ପୁତ୍ରକୁ ପେଲିଲା ଜଳ
> ଦଧିଭାଣ୍ଡରୁ ଲବଣୀ ଯେସନ୍ତେ କାଢ଼ି ନେଥିଲ ଆନନ୍ଦମୂଳ ।
> ସେହୁ ରୂପେ ମୁହିଁ ଭବସିନ୍ଧୁ ଜଳେ ଭାସି ଯାଉଅଛୁ ଦେଖ,
> ସଦାନନ୍ଦ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଉଧାରିବେ ବୋଲି ବେଳହୁଁ କରିଛୁ ଠିକ । (16/4,5)

The demon 'Hiranykasipu' killed his son (Prahallad) hundred times and threw him into water, but you saved him by lifting him like butter from the vessel of curd. Just like that I am being drifted away into the water of the ocean of the world and I have made up my mind from the beginning that 'Sadananda Swami' (ever blissful Lord) i. e. Mahima Gosain would save me at last.

In the 16th Boli of 'Stutichintamani', Bhima Bhoi has referred to several actions of the Lord Vishnu such as, the war of the elephant and the allegator, the female deer in the forest fire, abduction of Sita and her confinement in the Ashok Garden, undressing of Draupadi and so on; and all these activities are alluded to Mahima Gosain, thus equating him with Vishnu. At one place Bhima Bhoi has identified Mahima Gosain with Krishna and Jagannatha who are taken to be the different

manifestations of Vishnu. (S. C. 29/12,13).

ଯେଉଁ ଭଗବାନ ଗଙ୍ଗାରେ ସ୍ନାହାନ ମକରଗନ୍ଧରେ ଭୋଜନ
ବୃନ୍ଦାବନେ ନାଟ ରାଧାସଙ୍ଗେ ଭେଟ ଦ୍ୱାରକା ପୁରେ ଶୟନ ।
ସେ ପୁରୁଷ ଆଜ ବୀରବେଶେ ସଜ ନିଜ ରୂପ ଧରିକାଣ
ଉବସରେ ଠନି ପଦ୍ମର କାଢ଼ୁଛୁ, ଦୁଃଖ ମୁଁ କହିବି କାସ ?

In Bhajana (273) 'Radhika Vilasa' or Lover of Radha, i.e. Sri Krishna has been placed in "Dhuni Ghar" or Fire place which has a significant place in 'Mahima Dharma'. The Bhajana says—

ଧୂନି ଘରେ ରାଧିକା ବିଳାସ ଗୋ ,
କରିବେ ଭକତେ ଖେଳ ରସ ଗୋ—
ଦେଖି ଚାଲ ଯିବା ବେଶ ଗୋ—

means, There is 'Radhika-Vilasa' in 'Dhuni Ghara' or fire-place. The devotees will make sportive play there. Let us go to see the dress and so on. This 'Dhuni Ghara' may have some allusion to Dhuni Mandira of Joranda.

From the above discussion it appears that Mahima Religion has some relation or allusion to Vishnu, though at places it is described not to have any relation with any religion prevalent at present. In the 80th Boli of Stuti Chintamani it is stated—

ମହାଦେବ ଶିବଙ୍କର ଯାଞ୍ଚା ନୁହେ ତହିଁରୁ ଅତି କଠୋର
ଅଲେଖ ମହିମା ବୋଲିବ ର ପଦ ଅଷ୍ଟାଙ୍ଗ ଯୋଗ ଉପର ।
ଅବତାର ବିଷ୍ଣୁଙ୍କର ଯାଞ୍ଚା ନୁହେ ତହିଁରୁ ଅଟଇ ଗାଢ
କୋଟି କୋଟି ବିଷ୍ଣୁ ତାଙ୍କ ତହୁଁ ଜାତ ସେଠାକୁ ନୁହନ୍ତି ବଡ ;
ବ୍ରହ୍ମା ବେଦପଢଙ୍କର ଯାଞ୍ଚା ନୁହେ ତହିଁରୁ ଅଧିକ ଉଚ
ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଲା ଦିନୁ କୋଟି କୋଟି ବ୍ରହ୍ମା ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ପଛ ।
ନାଗାନ୍ତ ଯୋଗାନ୍ତ ଯାଞ୍ଚା ନୁହେ ଏହୁ ତହିଁରୁ ଆହୁରି ଆଣ
ଇସ୍ଲାମ ଧର୍ମ ଯେଉଁଠାରୁ ଛାଡୁଛୁ ଅଟନ୍ତି ପରା ବୈକୁଣ୍ଠ ।

ବେଦାନ୍ତ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ଦୀକ୍ଷା ଧର୍ମ ନୁହେ ରହନ୍ତି ଯେତେଦୂରେ
ନିର୍ବେଦ ଧାରଣା ଯାହାଙ୍କୁ ବୋଲନ୍ତି ଅଲେଖ ଅବନା ପୁରେ ।
ସନ୍ଥ ମହନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଦୀକ୍ଷା ଧର୍ମ ନୁହେ ଅଛି ବହୁତ ଅନ୍ତର
ଦେଖା ଶିଖା ଭକ୍ତ ସେ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ଠାବକୁ ନୁହଇଟର ବଳୀଆର ।
ନିଶବ୍ଦ ଭୁବନ ଦୀକ୍ଷା ଧର୍ମ ଏହୁ ନିର୍ବେଦର ଚଉତର
ଅଲେଖ ମହିମା ଯାହାକୁ ବୋଲନ୍ତି ଅରୂପ ତାଙ୍କ ଶରୀର ।

means, It is not the initiation into the religious rite of the great God 'Siva' That which is called. 'Alekha Mahima' is head and shoulder above the astanga or eight-fold yoga. It is not the religion of the 'Vishnu' incarnate as it is more intense than that. Crores and Crores of 'Vishnus' are born from Him. It is not the religion of 'Brahma' the master of Vedas as it is higher than that and crores and crores of Brahmas are born after Him. It is neither 'Naganti' nor 'Yoganti' initiation since it is stronger than them.' Niskama Dharma' or the dharmadevoid of all desire springs out from it. It is indeed 'Vaikuntha'. It is neither Vedanti nor sidhanti initiation as it is far away from them. It is Nirveda dharma or beyond the realm of perception or the 'Vedas' and it is in the abode of 'Alekha' (formless) and 'Abana' (beyond the words of spelling). Further it is neither the initiation nor the religion of the 'Santhas' or 'Mahantas', because there is a great difference between them. The borrowed or imitated devotion is not capable of reaching the place of that Brahman. It is a religion initiating one into 'Nisabda Bhubana' or worldless realm which is the abode of 'Nirveda'.

Here he has tried to establish the superority of this religion over all religions. But at the same time he does not lose the opportunity of establishing its identity with other religions or incarnations.

In the 10th Boli of 'Stuti Chintamani' Mahima Gosain is equated with all the incarnations with slight deviation like Matsya (Fish), Kurma (Tortoise). Rohi Matsya(in place of Varaha or Boar), Narasimha(Lion),Parasurama,Vaman,Ramachandra, Krishna, Darubrahma (Jagannath) and Kalki. As regards 'Kalki' avatara he says :—

ତ୍ରିପୁର ଜଗତ ଅନ୍ୟାୟ ବଢ଼ନ୍ତେ ଚତୁର୍ଧର୍ମ ହେଲା ନାଶ
ତାଳେ ତେଁ କଳଙ୍କି ଅବତାର ହେଲେ ବନ୍ଧୁ ବଇଷ୍ଣବ ବେଶ । 10/10

means, Unjust actions were spreading widely all over the worlds, the four-fold religion was disappearing and, therefore, the incarnation of Kalki in Vaishnavite garment took place. 'Kalki' is not described here with his traditional dress, holding a sword in his hand and riding on a horse. It appears from the passage that, Mahima Gosain him-self appeared in Kalki avatara for redressing the sufferings of the people. So, here, 'Vaishnava Vesa' or Vaishnavite dress may not be taken in its literal sense as the 'Vaishnava cult' widely differs from that of the Mahima cult. Mahima Gosain himself has been described to be old having emaciated body, matted hair, sometimes on 'Kaupina' or loin cloth and sometimes on bark. Most probably they belong to some yogi sect, and the words

like 'Vaishnava vesa', 'Vaishnava rupa', 'Vaishnava murti' and the like may be taken in the sense of those who have renounced the world as opposed 'grihi' or house-holder Therefore, in 'Bhajanamala' it is said :—

କଳିଯୁଗେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ଗୀତ
ମହିମା-ସାଗର ବିଜୟ କ୍ଷିତି ।
ସୁର.ନର ବେନି   ଜାଣି ନ ପାରନ୍ତି
ଶୂନ୍ୟ ବ୍ରହ୍ମଙ୍କର ଯେଉଁ ବିଭୂତି ।
ଜ୍ଞାନ ଧର୍ମ ଘେନି   ବିଜୟ ମେଦିନୀ
ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ବଇଷ୍ଣବ ମୂରତି   (53)

means, There is the Unique feature of the 'Kalki' age, Mahima sagara or Mahima Gosain has come down to the earth, neither God nor human beings, nobody can know the magnificient power of the Sunya Prabhu, who holding jnana (knowledge) and dharma (religion) has come to the earth in Vaishnava from.

further it is said in Bhajana mala :----

ଯେଉଁ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ରୂପ ଘୋଟି   ଦିଶଇ ଅସ୍ଥି ରୂପଟି
ସେ ପ୍ରଭୁ କାହିଁ ଅଛନ୍ତି ହେଜୁ କର ।
ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ଜଣେ ବୋଲଇଲେ   ଯୋଗୀ ସ୍ୱରୂପେ ମଣିଲେ
ମାନବ ଶକତି ନୁହେ ଅନାଦି ଈଶ୍ୱର ହେ । (75/4)

means, Realise where is that Lord who appears as an old man and looks emaciated. Some take him to be a Vaishnava, some regard him as a Jogi, but remember, He is not within the limitations of human power. He is the supreme Lord having no beginning.

There is belief amongst the followers of the Mahima sect that 'Mahima Gosain' was not born out of the womb of mother, but he created him-self:

କେହୁ ଦେଖିଛନ୍ତି ବେନି ନେତ୍ରରେ
ବୃଦ୍ଧ ବୟସରେ ଅତିଥି ବେଶରେ
ଯାଉଥିଲେ ଏହି ବେଶରେ ।
ପିତା ମାତା ନାହିଁ ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇଲେ
ସ୍ତନ ନ ଚୁମ୍ବିଣ କ୍ଷୀର ଖାଇଲେ ;
ବାପ ଧନ ବୋଲି ଗେଲ କରୁଥିଲି
ବସିଥିଲେ ମୋର କୋଳରେ ।

means, Has any body seen him with his own eyes going by this way in the dress of an 'Atithi' (mendicant), in his old age ? He has no parents, but was born. He took milk without sucking the breast. I was fondling him with the words 'bapa-dhana' (darling) and he was sitting on my lap. Here the reference is very mysterious.

ପିତା ମାତା ନାହିଁ ଅଯୋନିସମ୍ଭୂତ ନାହିଁ ରଜ ବୀର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଗନ୍ଧ
କେ ଗଢ଼ି ନାହିଁ ଆପେ ଗଢ଼ି ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଅରୂପ ଅନାଦି କନ୍ଦ । S.C.87/2

means, He has no parents, He is born not out of any womb, He has no scent of semen or blood, nobody has created him. He has created Himself. He has no form, no beginning and is the primevel root. There are various such references.

The lengthy discussion now seems to be off the point, but it is to show that the followers of the Mahima sect accept Mahima Gosain to be the supreme god, sometimes above all the Gods and some times equated with different Gods, specially with the 'Khira-Sindhu-Vasi Ananta Iswara' as already stated in Boli 68/3

like 'Vaishnava vesa', 'Vaishnava rupa', 'Vaishnava murti' and the like may be taken in the sense of those who have renounced the world as opposed 'grihi' or house-holder. Therefore, in 'Bhajanamala' it is said :–

 କଳିଯୁଗେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ସ୍ଥିତି
ମହିମା-ସାଗର ବିଜୟ କ୍ଷିତି ।
ସୁର ନର କେହୁ ଜାଣି ନ ପାରନ୍ତି
ଶୂନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଭୁଙ୍କର ଯେଉଁ ବିଭୂତି ।
ଜ୍ଞାନ ଧର୍ମ ଘେନି ବିଜୟ ମେଦିନୀ
ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ମୂରତି (53)

means, There is the Unique feature of the 'Kalki' age, Mahima sagara or Mahima Gosain has come down to the earth, neither God nor human beings, nobody can know the magnificient power of the Sunya Prabhu, who holding jnana (knowledge) and dharma (religion) has come to the earth in Vaishnava from.

further it is said in Bhajana mala :----

ଯେଉଁ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ରୂପ ହୋଇଟି ଦିଶଇ କ୍ଷୀଣ ରୂପଟି
ସେ ପ୍ରଭୁ କାହିଁ ଚିହ୍ନିଲ ହେଜ କର ।
ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ଜଣେ ବୋଇଲେ ଯୋଗୀ ପରସ୍ତେ ମଣିଲେ
ମାନବ ଶକତି ନୁହେ ଅନାଦି ଈଶ୍ୱର ହେ । (75/4)

means, Realise where is that Lord who appears as an old man and looks emaciated. Some take him to be a Vaishnava, some regard him as a Jogi, but remember, He is not within the limitations of human power. He is the supreme Lord having no beginning.

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ବୃଦ୍ଧ ବୟସରେ ଅତିଥି ବେଶରେ
ଯାଉଥିଲେ ଏହୁ ବେଶରେ ।
ପିତା ମାତା ନାହିଁ ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇଲେ
ସ୍ତନ ନ ଚୁମ୍ବିଣ କ୍ଷୀର ଖାଇଲେ ;
ବାପ ଧନ ବୋଲି ଗେଲ କରୁଥିଲି
ବସିଥିଲେ ମୋର କୋଳରେ ।

means, Has any body seen him with his own eyes going by this way in the dress of an 'Atithi' (mendicant), in his old age ? He has no parents, but was born. He took milk without sucking the breast. I was fondling him with the words 'bapa-dhana' (darling) and he was sitting on my lap. Here the reference is very mysterious.

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କେ ଗଢି ନାହିଁ ଆପେ ଗଢ଼ି ହୋଇଛୁ ଅରୂପ ଅନାଦି କନ୍ଦ । S.C.87/2

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"ଗୀରସିନ୍ଧୁ ବାସୀ ଅନନ୍ତ ଈଶ୍ୱର ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଅବତାର ।"

Ananta is an epithet of Vishnu and a name of 'Vasuki'. In both the sense it is used by Bhima Bhoi. When he was blessed by Mahima Gosain and initiated into 'Ekakshyara Brahma', it is said that the following prayer came out from his mouth spontaneously :—

ବନ୍ଦନା ପଦ ପଦ୍ମକୁ
ଧଇ ଅରୂପାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କୁ   ଧାର୍ମି ସ୍ୱାମୀ ପଦ୍ମରଙ୍କୁ
ନଖ କୋଣେ ସୁରପୁର   ମାଳ ମାଳ ଛନ୍ତି ପୂର
ଅନନ୍ତ ବାସୁକି ଶିରେ ବନ୍ଦୁଛି ମକରନ୍ଦକୁ ।

Here 'Ananta' is a part of 'Vasuki'. Similarly Ananta is used as an epithet of Vishnu and, therefore, of Mahima Swami.

Again in Bhajana 233-it is stated,

ଅନନ୍ତ ଅବତାର ବାହାର ହେ
ବିଭୂଷଣ ଯେ ରାଜ କୁମାର ହେ ।

means, Ananta incarnation has come having been dressed like a prince.

Further, in Bhajana 269/1, it is stated :—

"ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷରେ ଅନନ୍ତ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ରହି ଦେଖ
ଥୂଳ ଶୂନ୍ୟେ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଗୋପ୍ୟ ହେ ।
ପାତାଳେ ବାସୁକି ଗଣ   ଅନନ୍ତ ସେହି ନାରାୟଣ
ଶିରେ ବହି ସପ୍ତସିନ୍ଧୁ ଦ୍ୱୀପ
ରଚନା ଯନ୍ତ ବ୍ରହ୍ମାଣ୍ଡ   ଅଛି ପୃଥ୍ୱୀ ନବଖଣ୍ଡ
ଅନନ୍ତ ବାସୁକି ଶିରେ ଗୋପ୍ୟ ହେ ।"

means, Wait and see Ananta in reality. He is concealed in thulasunya or solid-void. In 'Patala' there are Vasukies and he (they) is (are) Ananta Narayana, who have carried seven oceans and

islands on head, three 'Brahmandas' (Universe) are created and there is the world with nine divisiohs, all concealed on the head of Vasuki.

This passage seems to be ambiguous. Are 'Ananta Vasuki' and 'Ananta Narayan' identified to be one here ? Has Ananta Narayana or Vishnu something to do with the snake-body of the 'Ananta Vasuki' ? It is already stated that Mahima Swami is equated with Ananta Vishnu .

In the life of Krupasindhu Baba, the elder, it is said that Mahima Swami gave the boon to the mother (mother of Krupasindhu) in a dream to have sons, the elder of whom to be offered to him (Mahima Gosain) for being his desciple. She further saw in a dream a man in temple who was very indistinct and having **seven-hoods** on the head, as narated in the book entitled 'Life of Baba Krupasindhu Baba' by Goganeswar Bhukta (Page-10). Further, in the same book it is said that when Mahima Gosain was in his 'Yogasana' at Kapilas for 21 days, Bada Krupasindhu Baba saw that thousand hoods of Ananta were on his head.

From this it is very clear that Mahima Gosain has some definite relation with. Ananta Vasuki. Thus Ananta Vasuki has become a symbol of the Mahima Cult. That is the reason that a seven-hooded snake is placed on the top of Mahima Temples.





SAMADHI MANDIR of BHIMA BHOI

Khaliapali (Balangir)



'SARANA' Scene of the devotees



'I HUNI MANDIR'—Joranda



'BALKALADHARI' Babas of Joranda



'SUNYA MANDIR'—Joranda



DIPAJHADA—Joranda



'NITI MANDIR'—Joranda



'KAUPINDHARI' Babas of Joranda

Our Writers :

Dr. Mayadhar Manasingh

Dr. Mayadhar Manasingh was very much controversial during his life time due to his straight forwardness and outspoken nature in the field of literature and criticism.

But he is very often referred to by critics,Research Scholars and writers in their valuable articles, which speaks about his knowledge and personality. He was a docter in Literature and was conferred by 'Padmashri'.

He started his career as a teacher in a High School of Bhawanipatna, an Ex-State of the State of Orissa. He worked in various capacity in the education Deptt. of Orissa. He had spent an important period of his life in Western Orissa.

He embraced Budhism in his later part of life. He also worked as Editor 'SWARAJYA' a daily-Oriya-News Paper for some time.

He was associated with many leading cultural and literary associations of Orissa.

His attitude towards younger generation was co-operation and guidence. In his last letter to the compiler of this 'Bhima Bhoi' (English) he was glad to allow to reproduce his Essay on 'Bhima Bhoi' from his famous book 'Saga of the land of Jagannath'.

The nation mourned for his death in 1973.

Shri Mahesh Prasad Das, M A.

Sri Mahesh Babu is now in charge of the State Archives, Orissa and is surrounded with old and new important records which is the essential food for research scholars and man of literature. Most of his articles and books deal with the historical back ground of Orissa His English book "Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts of Orissa, Vol. V". has been published by the Orissa State Museum and is treated as an authority.

Quite popular in his limited friend circle, he devotes most of his off-time in reading and writing. He belives in discharging his duties both official and non-official to the best of his ability and sincerety.

Born in the year 1936. After completing M. A. in history he joined in Orissa State Museum in the year 1960 as Curator. In that capatity he served there upto to 1971. Since 1971 he is working as the Superintendent of Archives (Govt. of Orissa).



Sri Mangalu Charan Biswal, M. A.

Mr. M. C. Biswal is not only the Head Master of Paramanpur High School, Paramanpur, in Sambalpur District, but also a master in arts.

He writes impressive Poems and attracts friends through his poetic nature and personality.

He has got quite a number of published books to his credit which comprises poetry, Short Story, translation and Children literature. He contributes articles and poems to many leading magazines regularly. Besides, his Folk songs broadcasted by the All India Radio are quite attractive.

He is also associated with many cultural and literary associations of Orissa. Mr. Biswal is quite enthusiastic and energetic in his choicest field of literature.

*



Shri Ramesh Chandra Dhall, Advocate

Mr. Ramesh Ch. Dhall is renamed as 'my-friend' by most of the persons associated in the fields of Culture and Literature.

He has got a number of Published Books to his credit which comprises poetry, stort story, Novel Biographies and Children literature. He writes regularly and declares that Literature is a part of his life.

He is an able organiser and associated with many leading literary and cultural organisations of Orissa. He has vast exprience in the field of Journalism too. For sometime he was in charge of 'Jhankara' and is editing 'JANAPATHA. He was awarded twice by the state government for Children Literature.

Most polite and co-operative in nature, he is now a Government Advocate in Bhudaneswar.

His present address :—Qr. No. 46/1. Type IVA.
Lane-II, Unit-II.
Bhubaneswar.

*

Shri Baikunthanath Senapaty, B.A. B. Ed.

Sri Baikunthanath Senapaty, son of late Banchhanidhi Senapaty : born on 1-8-1929 (First, August, Nineteen Hundred Twentynine) at Gaudabad Sahi, Puri Town.

Educated at Gadadhar High School, Puri---Samanta Chandra Sekhar College, Puri—Graduated from the Utkal University in the year 1950.

Engaged himself in Historical Research under the auspices of The Jagannath Historical Research Society, Raghunandan Library, Emar Matha, Puri, as Assistant Research Scholar and contributed his indefatigable endeavour towards the compilation of a genuine history of the Jagannath Temple, Puri. Attended the various sessions of the All India History Congress and submitted monographs bearing on the Orissan history in joint collaboration. From early years evinced an aptitude for literary pursuits, especially, for translation work—already translated in to English (in verse form or Prose) more than 300 original writings of different Oriya Poets and authors belonging to different ages.

Winner of the Second Prize in the All-India Prize contest sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in India in 1968.

After serving in many private High Schools of the State, took his B. Ed. Degree from the Utkal University in 1960.

At present serving as Headmaster in Mahatab High School, Delang : Dt. Puri.

• *Sri Prafulla Behera*, M. Sc.

Sri Prafulla Behera was born in the year 1940 at Cuttack. He passed his B. Sc. examination from Stewart Science College in 1963 and obtained M. Sc degree in Anthropology from the University of Utkal in 1965. He was also awarded Diploma in Social Science and Methodology in 1968 from the Utkal University. At present he holds the post of a compiler and is engaged in compiling State and District Gazetteers in Revenue (Gazetteers) Department, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar.

Apart from his field of specialisation in Physical Anthropology he has studied Social and Cultural aspects of Cuttack City. He has some publications in different Journals to his credit.



Dr. Harish Chandara Das, M.A (Anth)
M.A· (Hist), M. Mus. Ph. D.

Orissa State museum a repository of Cultural heritage is provided with a Superintendent as the head of institution with highly cultural bias. That man is Dr. Harish Chandra Das, a man with vivacity and adequate knowledge on Culture of Orissa. He improved the museum in par with important museums of India and as a result of which, the visitors of the country and abroad are very much attracted to this cultural centre.

He believes in discharging his duties and responsibilities to the best of his ability and sincerety. He is a scholar with strong background of Anthropology, Archeology, History and Music. Hence his research activities are spreaded to these aspects of Culture.

He was born in the year 1935 in Balasore District. Since 1969 he is working as the Superintendent of Orissa State Museum.

*

Shri Bhagirathi Nepak, B A. Hons.

'Nepak' is a rare and peculiar title in Orissa According to Prof. Prahallad Pradhan, this title might have been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Nyaya—Palaka'. Whatever may be the origin of the title, Shri Nepak became known in the field of literature in the early years of 1958-59 through his impressive poems published in leading magazines

Born in the year 1931-32, in the village Binka of Bolangir District (ex-Sonepur State) he was educated in Binka M. E. School, Sonepur High School and Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur and got his honours degree (Philosophy) in the year 1952 from Utkal University.

He has got 67 published books to his credit comprising of Novels, Short Story, Poetry Collections, One Act Dramas, Translations, Criticism and Children's literature. He is a regular writer at present.

Recently (May 1974) more than seven leading literary and cultural associations of the New Capital, Bhubaneswar assembled at 'Godavarish Sahitya Sansad Bhawan' to give ovation to Shri Nepak. Presiding over the meeting, Dr. Janaki Ballav Mohanty (Varadwaj) remarked : Sri Nepak stands for the co-ordination of the literature of Western and Eastern Orissa.

Editor, 'M. Chandrika', states : In Orissa, Bhagirathi Nepak means literature and literary institutions.

Editor, 'Jana Sahitya' remarks : "Shri Nepak is one among those Oriya Writers who has not stopped the flow of writing inspite of the innumerable adverse circumstances of the present system of society. That he has dedicated himself completely to the literature within the limited scope of his service-life, is really a matter of proud for the nation".

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